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A
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE
TO
THE ROMANS.

BY

THE REV. ROBERT ANDERSON,

**PERPETUAL CURATE OF TRINITY CHAPEL, BRIGHTON; AND CHAP-
LAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD HILL, AND
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD TEIGNMOUTH.**

LONDON:

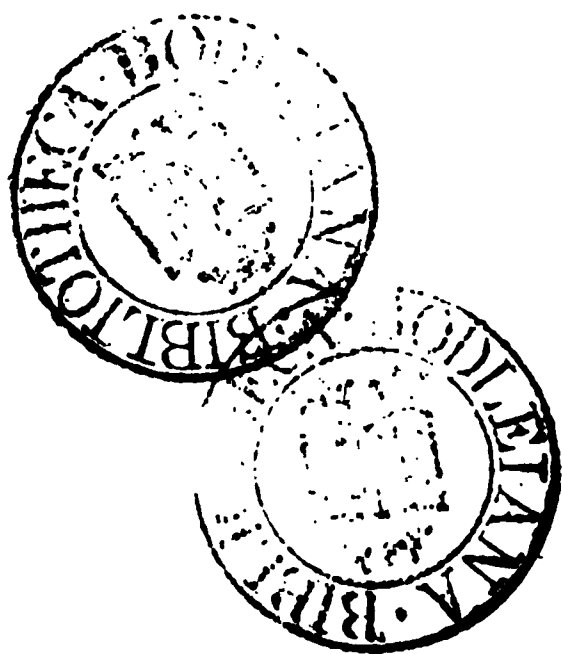
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PREFACE.

THE following Work contains the expository part of a Series of Afternoon Lectures, which were delivered in Trinity Chapel, Brighton, during the past, and part of the present year.

In some previous Discourses, I had been calling the attention of my flock to the several leading doctrines of the gospel; and I felt that, under the Divine blessing, it might conduce to our edification, if we proceeded to take a more connected and systematic view of these great truths. I proposed, therefore, that we should enter upon the consideration of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans; and, in my introductory discourse, I expressed my persuasion that the more difficult passages in this important Epistle would be best illustrated by being thus considered, not as detached and insulated portions of Scripture, but in immediate connexion with the general scope and bearing of the apostle's argument.¹

¹ I also took occasion to mention, in my opening discourse, that I was the more desirous to fix upon the epistle to the Romans as

It was with these views that I entered upon a series of Lectures, which occupied our attention for nearly eighteen months; and, during the progress of their delivery, some instances occurred in which it pleased God to make them profitable for instruction, and for consolation. But there are comparatively few of my congregation who have accompanied me through the whole of the series; and several persons, upon leaving Brighton, have expressed a wish that they might possess the Exposition in a complete form.

I have been led, therefore, amidst numerous and pressing avocations, to reduce it into a shape adapted for publication; and, by restricting myself, almost exclusively, to the expository part of the Lectures, I have been enabled to bring the substance of them within the compass of a small, unpretending volume, while, at the same time, I have endeavoured to retain the simple style and language in which they were delivered from the pulpit.

The table of contents, which I have prefixed to the Exposition, forms an analysis of the Epistle.

the subject of our meditations, because, in a recent instance, I had been permitted to witness the remarkable manner in which the simple exposition of this very Epistle had led, through Divine grace, to a heartfelt conviction of sin, and a joyful reception of the truth as it is in Jesus!

But were I asked to describe its subject matter in a few words, I would say that, in the larger portion of the first three chapters, St. Paul guards against Pharisaic self-righteousness, by shewing that *all are under sin*; that, from the latter part of the third to the end of the eighth chapter, he guards against the Antinomian heresy, by shewing how the doctrine of *justification by faith* is inseparably connected with *holiness of life*; that, in the ninth and two following chapters, he shews that the remedy, which has been in mercy provided for a sinful world, is of *universal application*; and that, in the last five chapters, he brings these truths home to the hearts of all believers, amidst all the various duties and relations of life, in the noblest strain of practical exhortation.

I will now say a few words respecting the manner in which, in humble dependence upon Divine aid, I have endeavoured, in this as in other instances, to provide for the instruction of the flock committed to my charge. Ever since my first entrance upon the duties of the Christian ministry, my attention has been repeatedly drawn to the admirable manner in which the Church of England combines that study of the sacred word, which she recommends to all her children, with a reverential attention to *catholic consent*, or to that which has been believed IN ALL PLACES,

AT ALL TIMES, BY ALL THE FAITHFUL.² Feeling strongly the importance of the above principle, and desiring, therefore, according to my humble measure, to act in the same spirit, I have, in all my preparations for the pulpit, sought, in the first place, in meditation and in prayer, to enter into the depth and spirit, the scope and connexion, of any given passage. I have then consulted, as far as it has been in my power, such commentaries and other books as bear upon the interpretation of holy writ ; and, wherever I have met with remarks well suited to illustrate the passage in hand, I have thankfully availed myself of such assistance, under the full conviction that it was my bounden duty to strengthen my own weak efforts by the wisdom and the piety of those, whether in the past or present age, who have laboured in the same sacred cause.

When I have thus employed, in the following pages, either wholly or chiefly, the language of others, I have generally given my authorities in the margin. And if I have not made such references in all instances, in which I have been more or less indebted to the labours of those who have gone before me, I have only abstained from doing so, because I have felt unwilling to make a parade of the various authors, whom I have had occasion to

² *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus, creditum est.*
VINCENTIUS LIRINENSIS.

consult in the preparation of my Lectures. But I desire to take this opportunity of acknowledging the benefit which I have derived from thus holding communion with the servants of God in every age. It is true that I have traced various shades of difference among them respecting some of the deep things of God; but I have invariably found that all who "hold the Head,"³ speak, as with one heart and one voice, upon those vital doctrines of the Gospel, which bear immediately upon the misery, and the salvation, of mankind!

Having spoken of the *deep things of God*, I would now go on to say, that I have always feared to tread where Scripture no longer seems to lead us by the hand, and where those who still press forward are too often found to contradict many decisive testimonies, or to oppose the general tenor, of the inspired writings. With respect to all points of this description, I desire to adopt, from my heart, the words of the wise and holy martyr Bishop Ridley: "In these matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak further, yea, almost none otherwise, than *the very text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand.*"

The Christian knows, indeed, that it is his highest privilege to launch forth into the deep of the divine promises; to spread every sail that he

³ Col. ii. 19.

may receive the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit; and to possess himself as much as possible of the fulness of God! But the Christian knows, also, that, instead of vainly attempting to explore those depths which are beyond the fathom line of the human understanding, he should look continually, with stedfast faith and joyful hope, to that "star of Jacob,"⁴ which shines, in the spiritual firmament, to cheer and to direct his course towards the haven of rest!

I have endeavoured, in the following Exposition, thus to point to Jesus as "the bright and morning star,"⁵ who only can "give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace!"⁶ I humbly trust that I have done so "in simplicity and godly sincerity;"⁷ that I have studied to "shew myself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;"⁸ and that I have neither spoken "peace," where there is "no peace," nor "made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad!"⁹ And, in now sending this little volume forth into the world, I earnestly call upon Him, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," beseeching him to "shine in our hearts, to give the

⁴ Numb. xxiv. 17.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 16.

⁶ Luke i. 79.

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 12.

⁸ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

⁹ Ezek. xiii. 10 and 22.

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,"¹ and to enable us "so to walk in the light of his truth, that at length we may attain to the light of everlasting life!"²

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

² Collect for St. John the Evangelist's day.

R. A.

BRIGHTON,
August, 1833.

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PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

SECTION I.

CHAPTER i. 1—7.

ST. PAUL'S SALUTATION TO THE CHRISTIANS AT ROME.

THE Epistle to the Romans is the only part of Scripture in which divine truth seems to be delivered in a systematic method; and it was well described by Paræus, an eminent German divine of the sixteenth century, as a "catechism for Christians, and a perfect body of apostolic doctrine." This Epistle is placed first in the order of the apostolical Epistles, not because it was the first in order of time, (for some others were written before it,) but because it may be regarded as a key to open the way for understanding the rest, and because it may be considered as a *catechism* or *introduction* to our most holy faith. It was written when St. Paul was preparing to depart

from Corinth for Jerusalem, with the alms which had been collected in Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor saints in Judea; and, as we gather from the Epistle itself, he was led to write to the Roman Christians, who had not yet been visited by any apostle, because he had heard of some divisions, both in judgment and affection, among the converts in that city, who were partly believing Jews, and partly believing Gentiles. The Jewish Christians mingled the law and gospel together in the point of justification, and so zealously upheld the Jewish law and the Mosaical rites, that they opposed the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles unless they would become proselytes and submit to circumcision. On the other hand, the Gentile Christians, considering themselves to be exempted from the observance of the Mosaic rites, were apt to abuse their christian liberty, so as to give offence to the believing Jews. It was chiefly with a view to reconcile these controversies, and to establish them all in the faith, and in unity of judgment and affection, that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to which I am now inviting your attention.

The first seven verses of this chapter contain a general salutation to the Christians at Rome: *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David ac-*

*according to the flesh ; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead : by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name : among whom are ye also the called of Christ Jesus : to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints : Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*¹

In this short passage the apostle speaks, 1st, of his own office, as a publisher of the gospel ; 2ndly, of the character of that gospel ; 3dly, of Him who is the grand subject of the gospel ; and, 4thly, of those who have been brought within its joyful sound.

1. Observe, in the first place, how he speaks of himself as a publisher of the gospel. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.* Such is the manner in which that very person is now brought before us, who, in the Acts of the Apostles, is introduced to our notice, first, as “consenting unto the death of Stephen ;” then as “making havock of the church, entering into every house, haling men and women, and committing them to prison ;” and, afterwards, as “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.”² He here describes himself as *a servant of Jesus Christ*, a title which he well knew to be the “highest

¹ Verses 1—7.

² See Acts vii. viii. and ix.

style of man.”³ This *servant of Jesus Christ* was called, by his immediate voice from heaven, *to be an apostle*; and he was *separated*, both in the eternal counsel of God, and by his special command and appointment, to preach unto the Gentiles *the gospel of God*. This *servant of Jesus Christ* tells us again, in the fifth verse, that by Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, he had *received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith*, (or, as we find it expressed in the margin, *to the obedience of faith*⁴,) *among all nations for his name*. Thus does St. Paul represent himself as having been *called to be an apostle*, and *separated unto the gospel of God*, that he might be employed, as the apostle of the Gentiles, to bring sinners from *all nations, to the obedience of faith*, for the honour of the Saviour’s *name*. And, in like manner, he says, still more emphatically, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that it “pleased God, who separated him from his mother’s womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen.”⁵

2. As he there tells the Galatian converts,⁶ he now regarded it as the one leading desire of his soul to “preach the faith, which once he destroyed.” And, therefore, although he had not been instrumental in planting the gospel at Rome, yet, as the apostle of the Gentiles, he felt himself con-

³ Scott *in loc.*

⁴ And see ch. xvi. 26.

⁵ Gal. i. 15, 16.

⁶ Gal. i. 23.

strained to write to the converts in that city, in order that he might establish them in the faith. What, then, let us inquire in the second place, was the character of the message with which he was charged? He was commissioned to preach among the heathen the *gospel of God*; in other words, he was commissioned to preach those good tidings of great joy which have been revealed from heaven by God himself, and which are therefore called *the gospel of God*. And think not, as the apostle seems to say, that this is any new device or invention. No; it is the same gospel which God *promised by his prophets in the holy Scriptures*: it comprises the whole hope of sinful man since the fall of Adam; and it was *promised by the prophets* many ages before it was published by the apostles of Jesus Christ.

3. This description of the *gospel of God*, as having been *promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures*, was well suited to arrest the attention of the Jewish converts; and nothing could be more admirably adapted to the same end, than the manner in which St Paul, as I would observe in the third place, proceeds to speak of the *grand subject of the gospel*. 'This *gospel of God*, (says St. Paul,) *concerns his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*. The language of

these verses is peculiarly emphatic; and if we attend to the very remarkable manner in which the terms of one verse are placed in contrast with those of the other, we shall find that they tend to illustrate and enforce the solemn, mysterious truth that He, who took upon him our flesh, is indeed "God of God, Light of light, very God of very God."⁷

Observe, then, in the first place, how, in speaking of him who is the great subject of the gospel, St. Paul says, on the one hand, that *he was made of the seed of David*, and, on the other hand, that *he was declared to be the Son of God*. By thus representing Christ as having been *MADE of the seed of David*, an expression which plainly imports something that did not exist before, our apostle clearly and strongly describes his human nature; and by representing him as having been *NOT MADE, but DECLARED to be the Son of God*, he as clearly expresses his divine nature, telling us that he had now been *declared, or manifested to be*, what he had indeed been from eternity, viz. *the Son of God*.

Observe, in the second place, the marked contrast between the expression, *made of the seed of David* ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, and *declared to be the Son of God with power*, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS. It is evident that the word *spirit* is used here in opposition to the *flesh*, in order to denote, as in other parts of the New

⁷ Nicene Creed.

Testament,⁸ the *divine*, in opposition to the *human* nature of Christ. And whereas the apostle speaks of the *spirit of HOLINESS*, we may suppose that he here considers the divine nature of Christ according to the relation which it bore to his other nature, and the effect which it exercised thereon. For it was his divinity which *sanctified, consecrated, and*, by the mysterious union of the two natures in one divine person, *deified* his humanity.⁹

Observe, lastly, how it is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that he was *declared to be the Son of God with power, by THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD*. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is here adduced as a most powerful argument and demonstration that he was the *Son of God*; the only-begotten of the Father; of the same nature and substance with Him, the Almighty and Eternal God! To the same effect our apostle argues elsewhere,¹ when, speaking of Christ's resurrection, he repeats those words which God spake of his Son by the Psalmist,² saying, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" *i. e.* this day I have *declared and manifested* to the world, that thou art my only-begotten Son. Christ was, indeed, the *Son of God* from all eternity; but, by his *resurrection from the dead*, he was *manifested* to be so to all men; and he is said, therefore, to have been then *begotten*, because he was then *declared*

⁸ See 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁹ Dr South.

¹ Acts xiii. 33.

² Psal ii 7.

by God himself to be begotten of him, and so to be his essential and eternal Son.

4. I have thus pointed out the manner in which the apostle speaks of his own office as a publisher of the gospel; of the character of the gospel which he had to publish; and of him who is the grand subject of the gospel. It remains only that I direct your attention to the manner in which he speaks of those who are brought within its joyful sound, and whom he describes, in the sixth verse, as the *called of Jesus Christ*. *To all that be in Rome*, says the apostle, *beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

You here behold, brethren, the privilege of your Christian profession, *beloved of God*; and the end of your high vocation, *called to be saints*. You behold, in the first place, your Christian privilege; *the beloved of God*. St. Paul, you observe, employs these words as applicable to *all* the Christians at Rome. Not that the church in that city was wholly exempt from unsound and hypocritical professors, but because, by the law and judgment of charity, we are bound to regard all those as the *beloved of God*, and *called of Jesus Christ*, who outwardly profess themselves to be Christians, and whose conversation does not plainly contradict their profession, leaving the judgment of certainty to God. And even so would I desire always to address you as the *beloved of God*, leaving the

judgment of certainty to God, and entreating you to consider what this expression denotes. It reminds you that the *love of God* is the fountain of all other benefits. It reminds you that the forgiveness of your sins, and your acceptance with God, are to be ascribed, not to your merits, but wholly and solely to that mysterious, unutterable *love*! “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”² Such is the inestimable privilege of which you are all invited to partake, viz. to be the *beloved of God*. But as you would desire that this privilege should indeed be yours, consider in the next place, the end of your christian vocation. You are *called to be saints*. Observe the full scope and signification of these words. Christians are not *therefore* called of God, *because* they are holy; but they are *therefore* holy, *because* they are called by his grace.

Yes, brethren, as the *beloved of God*, you are *called to be saints*; i. e. to be separated from the maxims and practices of an ungodly world, and to be consecrated unto God. How, then, can any of you, who “name the name of Christ,”⁴ ever consent to join with an ungodly, unbelieving world, in speaking lightly or irreverently of that word *saint*, which is here employed to denote the end of your christian calling? How can any of you ever consider it lawful to use, as a term of re-

² 1 John iv. 10.⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 19.

proach, that word which you are here taught to regard as the badge of all the people of God? Has not he said, “Be ye holy, for I am holy?”⁵ and if, therefore, instead of desiring to be “partakers of his holiness,”⁶ you can wantonly employ the term *saint* in the way of insult or derision, consider within yourselves, how can you possibly escape the wo which is pronounced against those who “call evil good and good evil?”⁷ And you, on the other hand, who, in humble self-denying faith, are endeavouring, day by day and hour by hour, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,”⁸ shew, by the consistency of your daily life and conversation, that you are not *ashamed of the gospel of Christ*.⁹ If you are *called to be holy*, make it the prayer of your lips and the business of your lives, that you may “be holy in all manner of conversation.”¹ If you are *called to be holy*, see that “holiness to the Lord”² be inscribed upon your foreheads, in all the duties, and amidst all the relations of life. If you are *called to be holy*, pray continually unto him who has “knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of his Son Christ our Lord,”³ beseeching him to give you “*grace* so to follow his blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that you may come to those un-

⁵ Lev. xi. 44, and 1 Pet. i. 16.

⁶ Heb. xii. 10.

⁷ Isa. v. 20.

⁸ Eph. iv. 1.

⁹ Ver. 16.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 15.

² Exod. xxviii. 36.

³ Collect for All Saints' Day.

speakable joys which he has prepared for them that unfeignedly love him, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

And this brings me, in conclusion, to the prayer with which the apostle closes his salutation, viz., *Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* If the ungodly and the unbelievers choose to misrepresent you, as assuming any thing to yourselves, shew, by your humble walk with God, that you do not deem yourselves "worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under his table."⁴ While you feel that, as the *beloved of God*, you are *called to be saints*, and to be devoted to his service, remember, at the same time, how it is declared in every page of scripture, (and ask yourselves whether the experience of your own hearts does not set its seal to the declaration,) that you are not "sufficient of yourselves to think any thing as of yourselves, but that all your sufficiency is of God;"⁵ and that it is only his *grace* which can enable you "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."⁶

Yes, brethren, it is the *grace of God* which takes away the *guilt* of sin, and makes us "accepted in the Beloved;"⁷ it is the *grace of God* which also takes away the *power* of sin, and makes us to be

⁴ Communion Office.

⁶ Tit. ii. 12.

⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

⁷ Eph. i. 6

“holy in all manner of conversation.”⁸ And well, therefore, does the apostle Peter describe our God as “the God of all grace.”⁹ Again, this fulness of *grace* springs from the free mercy of God, the reconciled Father of all believers; and it flows to them through the person, merits, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And well, therefore, may the apostle pray for all believers, that they may have this *grace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is to this “God of all grace,” even “God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them,”¹ that I now commend your souls for pardon and for peace! I pray for you that, as those who are *called to be holy*, you may have “*grace* whereby you may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;”² and I pray for you, that, as the *beloved of God*, you may enjoy that *peace* which “passeth all understanding.”³

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 15.⁹ 1 Pet. v. 10.¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.² Heb. xii. 28.³ Phil. iv. 7.

SECTION II.

CHAPTER i. 8—17.

ST. PAUL, AFTER STRONGLY EXPRESSING HIS AFFECTION FOR THE ROMAN CONVERTS, DECLARES "WHAT HIS GOSPEL IS, AND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IT SHEWETH."

We find that St. Paul, at the commencement of his Epistles, generally subjoins to the apostolical benedictions a solemn thanksgiving for the faith, charity, patience, and other graces of the brethren to whom he writes, in order that he may make them sensible of their high privileges, and lead them to walk more worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Accordingly, in the epistle before us, after ending the salutation which is contained in the first seven verses, St. Paul thus proceeds: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*¹ And then, to the end of the fifteenth verse, he goes on strongly to express his affection for his Christian brethren at Rome; thus endeavouring to win their good will towards himself, that so he may introduce, with greater advantage, the doctrines which he is about to bring before them in the remainder of the epistle.

St. Paul has just given proof of the love which

¹ Ver. 8.

he bore the Roman converts, by declaring that he rejoiced and gave thanks for their great measure of faith in the gospel; and he now goes on to prove his love to them still more emphatically, by telling them that he always remembered them in his prayers, and that he was earnestly desiring to come among them. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*²

When St. Paul says, in the eleventh verse, that *he longs to see them, that he may IMPART UNTO THEM SOME SPIRITUAL GIFT, to the end they may be established*, it may be supposed that the expression refers more particularly to those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were generally conferred by the imposition of the apostles' hands. He thus reminds the Roman converts, therefore, of his apostolical character and authority, as sanctioning his doctrine. But while he deems it necessary, by this declaration of his own authority, to guard the converts more effectually against Judaizing teachers, he does so, you observe, in the most unassuming

² Ver. 9—12.

and affectionate manner. *That I may be comforted* (he says) *together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me*; or, as the words may be paraphrased, *That I may communicate, and that you may receive, these spiritual gifts; and that correspondent graces may be working on each side, which will be for my own improvement as well as for yours.* For we may well believe, brethren, that every new instance, in which miraculous gifts were communicated by the imposition of hands, would be a source of new edification to the apostles themselves, as being so evident a token of the divine presence with them, and as being a new and solemn seal set to the commission which they had received.³ But I cannot quit this passage without expressing my conviction that the apostle refers, at the same time, to the edification which he and his Roman brethren would mutually receive from the enjoyment of a personal intercourse. And, so understood, the words contain a truth which is abundantly realized in every age of the church; viz., that ministers and their people mutually profit by the intercourse which they enjoy one with another. Earthly blessings are always found to decrease as they are used; but heavenly blessings increase and multiply to *ourselves*, by our use of them for the benefit of *others*; so that no Christian pastor can administer consolation to the sick without deriving comfort

³ Doddridge in *loc.*

and instruction to himself in the discharge of that solemn duty.

But, to proceed with the passage before us: *Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*⁴

You learn, from these verses, how earnestly and frequently the apostle desired to visit the Roman converts; but when you refer to the Acts of the Apostles, you find how one circumstance arose after another to prevent the accomplishment of his intention, until, at length, he was sent to Rome as a prisoner. The manner in which it thus pleased God to answer the apostle's prayer was very different from that which must have been contemplated by himself, when he prayed, *if by any means now, at length, he might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto them.*⁵ But I would here take occasion to observe, that the very circumstance of his having been sent to Rome as an appellant to Cæsar, conduced, under the divine blessing, to the wider diffusion of the gospel in that imperial city; insomuch that,

⁴ Ver. 13—15.

⁵ Ver. 10.

in writing to the Philippians, to whom he sends the brotherly salutation of the saints, especially those who were of "Cæsar's household,"⁶ he expressly assures them, that what had befallen him, instead of being a hindrance, had so far proved a furtherance of the gospel, that "his bonds in Christ had been made manifest in all Cæsar's court and in all other places."⁷ And may we not learn from this how necessary it is that we should *continue instant in prayer*,⁸ under the full persuasion that, in his own time and manner, God will grant that which will be most expedient for us.

Observe also, in the above passage, how the apostle represents himself as being under the constraining influence of the love of Christ. *I am debtor*, he says, *both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise*:⁹ i. e. When I speak of myself as earnestly desiring to see you, you must not suppose that the desire so expressed relates *wholly and exclusively to yourselves*; for I regard it as a solemn duty, which I owe to *all nations*, to preach unto them the gospel of peace. *So, as much as in me is, I am ready, (with an eagerness of desire, as the original word imports,¹) to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*²

For, as he adds in the two concluding verses, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it*

⁶ Phil. iv. 22.⁷ Phil. i. 13.⁸ Ch. xii. 12.⁹ Ver. 14.¹ πρόθυμον.² Ver. 15.

*is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*³ It is in these verses, brethren, that the apostle enters upon that which forms the grand subject of the epistle ; viz., the doctrine of *justification by faith*. And there is something particularly striking in the manner in which he introduces it. He had said, in the fifteenth verse, that he was *ready to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome also*. But, (as many in that proud city might have objected,) if the gospel is everywhere spoken against, and if its doctrines are treated with derision, how canst thou vainly think to teach us more wisdom by the gospel ? *I am not ashamed*, says the apostle in reply, *of the gospel of Christ*. Though the inhabitants of Rome were numbered among the great, the learned, and the wise ; and though the gospel came in all simplicity amongst them, yet St. Paul was not ashamed to profess himself the publisher of these plain and despised doctrines. And he immediately goes on to shew, that there was no need for him to be ashamed of this gospel, how mean and contemptible soever it might appear to the world, seeing *that it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*. Rome might boast of her arm of flesh, and might extend her work of destruction

³ Verses 16, 17.

to the utmost limits of the then known world ; but, as our apostle argues, the gospel reveals the arm of God, making itself bare in behalf of all *believers*, of all nations and in all ages, to the salvation of body and soul. Yea, *it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that BELIEVETH ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* For therein, as the apostle adds, *is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith :* in other words, that gracious acceptance, on the part of God, whereby he accounteth us as righteous in his sight, through the merits of his Son ; that wonderful method of *salvation for every one that BELIEVETH*, is revealed to us in and by this gospel. It is *revealed*, says the apostle, *from faith to faith ;* that is, from one degree of faith to another ; evidently implying, that the sense and assurance of our justification will increase in us, in proportion to the increase of our faith. For faith may be justly described as the *way* by which we pass from death to life ; *as it is written, the just shall LIVE by faith.* And must it not follow, therefore, that the more we advance in this blessed path, the more we shall know and feel of that spiritual life, of that full assurance of hope, which is at once the pledge and the foretaste of everlasting glory ?

The words which the apostle here recites, as declarative of the life of faith, are taken from the prophet Habakkuk ;⁴ and ought not this to re-

⁴ Hab. ii. 4.

mind us that the doctrine of which the apostle here speaks, and which forms, as I have said, the grand subject of this epistle, is no new doctrine, but a doctrine taught under the old as well as under the new dispensation? Yes, brethren, it was in this *very same faith* that those of the elder church lived and died, of whom our apostle speaks in his epistle to the Hebrews;⁵ and they are there represented as “a cloud of *witnesses*” compassing the Christian, while he “runs with patience the race that is set before him.” And why is this, but because ever since the fall of Adam, “man has been very far gone from *original righteousness*, and has been of his own nature inclined to evil?”⁶ Why is this, but because ever since the fall of Adam, the best and the holiest of men have been “accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *by faith, and not for their own works or deservings* ;”⁷ and because, therefore, whether under the old or new dispensation, Christ has been the *end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* ?”⁸

⁵ See Heb. xi and xii.⁶ Article ix.⁷ Article xi.⁸ Rom. x. 4.

SECTION III.

CHAPTER i. 18—32.

GOD'S WRATH AGAINST ALL MANNER OF SIN; AND AN
AWFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE GENTILE WORLD.

ST. Paul, in speaking of the gospel of Christ, says, in the seventeenth verse, that *therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* But in vain does the gospel exhort men to seek righteousness and salvation in Christ alone, as apprehended by faith, unless all men shall be previously convicted as guilty of unrighteousness.¹ And accordingly, this the apostle now begins to prove, concluding his argument at the twentieth verse of the third chapter. Attend, then, in this part of the epistle, to the manner in which the apostle establishes this mournful but most important truth, viz. that *all have sinned*; and you will be fully prepared to join in the conclusion which he draws; viz. that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight.*² The portion which I have now selected for our meditation is the remainder of the first chapter, beginning at the eighteenth verse; and I pray that, as we dwell on the awful representation which is here given to us of the state of

¹ Beza in loc.² Ch. iii. 20.

the Gentile world, we may be led to adopt the language of the prophet Jeremiah, and to say, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." ³

St. Paul, having already described the gospel of Christ as being the *power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*, now proceeds to shew that there is not, and cannot be, any other method of justification or acceptance with God but *by faith*. For, as he goes on to say, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*⁴ As for the works of men, (thus the apostle seems to argue in these verses,) they are altogether sinful, and such as lie justly open to the severest judgments of God; since, both by his word, and by sensible experience, the wrath of God is plainly denounced against all the ungodliness and all the unrighteousness of men. And must it not be said, moreover, of the children of men, that they turn away from the light of that law of God which is written in the book of nature itself; and that, though they cannot but know what they ought to do, and to leave undone, yet they smother this truth in themselves, and give way to their own wickedness? Assuredly

³ Jer. x. 23.

⁴ i. 18, 19.

it is not for man to plead ignorance; for by what God has written on the face of nature, and by all the methods of his providence, he has engrafted in man's heart a certain knowledge both that he is; and that he is just, and holy, and powerful. *Yea, that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*⁵

The apostle, you observe, expressly declares, in the eighteenth verse, that God has revealed his wrath against all *ungodliness* and all *unrighteousness* of men. It is not enough then, on the one hand, that you do no harm to men, for God has revealed his wrath against *all ungodliness*; that is, against every violation or neglect of the duties of the first table of the law. Neither is it enough, on the other hand, that you are zealous in the outward service of God, seeing that he has also revealed his wrath against *all unrighteousness*; that is, against every violation or neglect of the second table of the law. It is also worthy of remark, how it is here said of the *wrath of God*, that it is revealed, not against the ungodly and unrighteous, but against *all ungodliness and unrighteousness*; as if the apostle would silently remind us that the wrath of God is directed not against the *persons* of sinners, but against the *sins* which they commit; and that while the wrath of the world rages against the *persons* of offenders, God has revealed a way whereby he destroys *sin*,

⁵ Ver. 19.

and at the same time vouchsafes to the *sinner* pardon and peace !

The apostle says, in the nineteenth verse, that God had *shewed unto men* that *which might be known of him* ; and it is sufficiently evident from the following verses, that he is here referring to the book of *nature*, which has been well described as the gospel of the pagan world. *For*, as he goes on to say, *the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse : because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*⁶

Yes, brethren, thus it was that men *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, and thereby voluntarily extinguishing the light which they possessed, rushed into all the abominations of idolatry, *changing the glory of the uncorruptible God*, not only into an *image made like to corruptible man*, but into images of *birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*. Such is the awful picture of

⁶ Ver. 20—23.

the manner in which the Gentiles entirely forsook the knowledge and the worship of the only true God ; and the remaining part of the chapter contains a representation, confirmed by the history of the Gentile world, of the manner in which these idolators were in consequence judicially abandoned to every evil and corrupt affection. I say *judicially abandoned*, because, when the apostle goes on to say, 1st, that God *gave them up to uncleanness*; 2ndly, that he *gave them up unto vile affections*; and 3dly, that he *gave them over to a reprobate mind*; it deserves to be remarked, that, in each case, God did not abandon *them*, until they had first abandoned *themselves*, to the desperate wickedness of their own corrupted hearts. As the apostle says elsewhere,³ “the Gentiles being past feeling, *gave themselves over* unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;” and therefore it was that, in his just displeasure, God *gave them up* to the vilest passions and inclinations; so that they were left to practise such unnatural lusts as are not fit to be named, except as a stigma on human nature, and to enhance the grace of our redemption. *Wherefore*, (proceeds the apostle,) *God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for*

³ Eph. iv. 19.

*ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use unto that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*⁴

The judicial character of this awful abandonment is declared with peculiar emphasis at the twenty-eighth verse; where it is said, *that even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind*, (or, as it is in the margin, *to a mind void of judgment*,⁵) *to do those things which are not convenient.* The Gentiles, (as the apostle seems to say,) would not exercise their minds to search out the truth, and form their judgment aright; and therefore God gave them over to an *unsearching, undiscerning, undistinguishing* mind. They did not approve of paying a proper homage to God, and therefore he suffered their minds to be as corrupt as their hearts; so that, not *judging or approving* what is right, they were *filled*, as the apostle goes on to say, (and how appalling is the representation which is

⁴ Ver. 24—28.

⁵ ἀδόκιμον νοῦν.

here given to us of the deadly fruits of a *reprobate mind*!) filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.⁵

My brethren, as we contemplate the features of this dark and frightful picture, must we not feel that if man, "in departing from the living God,"⁶ madly desired to try whether he could not be happy without him; God, in giving him over to all the bitter fruits of a *reprobate mind*, has made it plainly appear into what an abyss of misery we are plunged when we cease to be supported by his everlasting arms? What a view, moreover, does the apostle here give us of the desperate wickedness of the human heart, when he tells us that those who are thus given over to a *reprobate mind*, are not content with following others in the paths of vice, but that they are actually inventors of evil things! Again; how striking is the representation which is here afforded of a *reprobate mind*, when the apostle speaks of all such,

⁵ Ver. 29—32. ⁶ Heb. iii. 12.

not only as *doing these things*, but as *having pleasure in them that do them*, and so becoming not only actors, but patrons and abettors of evil. Once more; observe how it is said of all such persons, that, while they *do these things*, and *have pleasure in them that do them*, they *know the judgment of God*, that they *which commit such things are worthy of death*; which is as much as to say that they actually dare to laugh at the sword of vengeance which divine justice brandishes before them! For, (to borrow the powerful language of Dr. South), we must know that God has set a flaming sword, not only before Paradise, but before hell itself also, to keep man out of this, as well as out of the other; and conscience is the angel into whose hand this sword is put. But if the sinner shall not only wrestle with this angel, but throw him too, and win so complete a victory over his conscience, that the most solemn considerations shall not be able to strike any terror into his mind, or to lay any restraint upon his lusts, any control upon his appetites; he is certainly too strong for the means of grace, and his heart lies open, like a broad and high road, through which every species of wickedness may freely pass.

True it is, my Christian brethren, that the picture now before you is a picture of the heathen world. And true it is, also, that, in this Christian country, our laws and customs restrain and drive into dark recesses those abominations which stalked

abroad, with such horrid effrontery, among the Pagans. But is it not equally true, that in this, and every other Christian country, there are multitudes who might seem to be the original of this gloomy picture? Is it not true that in this, our own highly favoured land, we exhibit the most lamentable proofs of the depravity of man; a depravity which is seen to overleap every barrier, and to overpower every motive?

This home application of the fearful truths contained in the above passage, is forcibly inculcated at the commencement of the next chapter; and feeling, as I do, the importance of such an application, I would here call upon you to ask yourselves, seriously and solemnly, as in the presence of God, whether it can be said of any among you that, according to the language of the apostle in the eighteenth verse, you *hold or imprison the truth in unrighteousness*? It was by the various acts of *ungodliness and unrighteousness* enumerated in the passage before you, that the inhabitants of Pagan Rome thus detained the *truth* in unrighteousness. And may it not be said, that in this, and every other Christian community, every sinful passion, every unruly and corrupt affection, which leads us to *worship and serve the creature more than the Creator*, is a fresh link added to the chain with which the *truth* is so *imprisoned and shut up*, that it cannot break forth upon our benighted minds?

Say not, then, that the things contained in this Scripture are nothing unto you ; but if any of you feel conscious of being more or less under the dominion of any one ruling passion, let me entreat you to regard that ruling passion as the chain with which the *truth* is so *fettered* and *tied down*, that the voice of this heaven-born captive cannot enter into your ears. Deceive not your own souls ! You may be apt to talk yourselves, and you may hear others talk, of the difficulties of revelation ; but let me assure you that the real difficulty lies, not in the Scriptures of truth, but in your own deceitful hearts. Little as you may yourselves suspect it, some ruling passion, some leading object of desire is still striving to get the mastery over you ; and as long as your wills are thus permitted to tyrannize over you and to hold you in thralldom, so long will the ministers of the gospel appeal to you in vain. It is the heart which must receive the lessons of heavenly wisdom ; and as long, therefore, as your hearts remain the slaves of every sinful and corrupt affection, so long must the *truth* partake of the same hard and abject bondage ; and as long as the *truth* is thus *imprisoned* and *shut up in unrighteousness*, so long will it be as vain for the ministers of Christ to attempt to move you, as it would be vain to waste harmonious sounds upon the deaf, or to display brilliant colours before the blind.

But if you are indeed convinced that it is the

indulgence of your corrupt wills and affections which detains the *truth* and silences her heavenly accents, blessed are ye if you have also received into your hearts the important conclusion, that every sinful passion subdued will be a link removed from the chain which binds her down. For, under this persuasion, you will pray that "all things belonging to the flesh may die within you, and that all things belonging to the spirit may live and grow within you;"⁷ and, in answer to faithful persevering prayer, you will find that the *truth*, no longer tied and bound with the chain of your sins, will be revealed to the eye of faith, in her robe of heavenly light, to guide you amidst all the dangers and difficulties of your earthly pilgrimage; to disengage you more and more from the cares, the honours, and the pleasures of this sinful world; and to whisper to you of that "liberty with which Christ hath made us free."⁸

⁷ Office of Baptism.

⁸ Gal. v. 1.

SECTION IV.

CHAP. II. VER. 1—11.

THEY WHO JUDGE OTHERS, CONDEMN THEMSELVES. "NO
RESPECT OF PERSONS WITH GOD."

THE solemn and important truths which were brought under our consideration in the latter part of the first chapter, fitly introduce, as I mentioned in the last section, that part of the apostle's argument with which the second chapter commences. *Therefore, says St. Paul, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*¹ Observe, I beseech you, the admirable manner in which the apostle gradually approaches the case of his Jewish brethren. From what he had been saying, in the first chapter, to prove the Gentiles to be inexcusable in their wickedness, he now justly infers that the sins of those who had such knowledge of the truth as to condemn the vices of others, were of a still more malignant character. This was evidently the case with the Jews; and yet, though he makes mention of them at the ninth and tenth verses, he does not fix the charge directly upon them until the seventeenth verse; but he draws the inference at first in such general terms as might

¹ Ver. 1.

also comprehend not only Gentile philosophers, but all persons whose own practice contradicts the instruction which they give, and who, while they judge and condemn others, are themselves justly exposed to condemnation. The word, in the original, which is rendered, *thou that judgest*,² may be understood as denoting the *habit* or *practice* of so doing; and I may observe to you that the frequent repetition of the same word, *judging*, in this opening verse, naturally prepares the way for the mention which the apostle proceeds to make of the divine judgment.

*But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things.*³ The judgment of God, as the apostle would here remind us, unlike the judgment of man, which is partial and “according to the appearance,”⁴ is invariably *according to the truth* of men’s actions and estates. And well, therefore, may we fear this true and righteous judgment, which is not according to the blindness, the deceitfulness, and the corruption of the human heart, but according to the truth of God’s holiness and justice, *against them which commit such things*. And, as the apostle continues, *thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*⁵ That is, as he seems to argue; If thy fellow-sinners cannot stand

² ο κρινων³ Ver. 2.⁴ John vii. 24.⁵ Ver. 3.

before thee in judgment, how shalt thou, who art guilty of the same things, escape the righteous condemnation of a heart-searching God?

*Or, says the apostle, indirectly but powerfully alluding to the advantages which the Jews had enjoyed, despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*⁶

In this verse, St. Paul distinctly represents the *goodness* of God as a motive for repentance; and in the variety of expressions which are here employed, we behold only the exercise of this divine attribute in every variety of light. The apostle speaks, you observe, of God's *forbearance* and *long-suffering*. Now, what is *forbearance* but the *goodness* of God exercised in withholding the vengeance denounced against transgressors? And what is *long-suffering*, but the same *goodness* of God continued under repeated and obstinate provocations? There is, however, this distinction to be made between the *goodness* and the *patience* of God. Man, as needy, is the partaker of the one; while man, as guilty, is the object of the other. Goodness supplies our wants; patience bears with our sins. The one will endure for ever, and is inseparable from the divine nature; the other is adapted only to the present scene of things, and may end to-morrow. It is in the great mystery of redemption that we behold its manifestation;

⁶ Ver. 4.

and when Christ's mediatorial work of mercy is accomplished, *patience* will be seen no more, but will remain hidden for ever in the bosom of Jehovah.⁷

' In the mean time, the word of God appeals to every one whose heart remains untouched by the mercies which surround him, and says, *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.*⁸

My brethren, on every fresh perusal of this passage, I seem to be more deeply impressed with the manner in which it illustrates the grand scriptural truth, viz. that God willeth man's salvation, but that man perversely chooseth his own destruc-

⁷ Bradley's Sermons.

⁸ Ver. 4—11.

tion. Mark, I beseech you, in the first place, the very emphatic language of the fifth verse, *after thy hardness and impenitent heart, (thou) treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* It is here plainly declared, not that God desires to inflict, but that man chooses to *heap, or treasure up wrath unto himself.* It is here plainly declared that man is *his own destroyer;* and the language of the apostle reminds us of that touching appeal in Hosea, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."⁹ I would observe, in the next place, that the above observation is strengthened by the apparent unwillingness of the apostle to make express mention of that eternal death which awaits all impenitent sinners. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour and immortality,* God, he says, will render *eternal life.* But how does he express himself with respect to *them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness?* It is evident that, in order to complete the sentence, as also to preserve that correspondence between the clauses of the several verses which is so characteristic of the sacred idiom, St. Paul should have said, *He will render eternal death.* But as if he desired that these words should be supplied by the conscience of the sinner, the apostle here suddenly

⁹ Hosea xiii. 9

changes the structure of the sentence, (a change which is plainly marked in the original by the transition from the accusative to the nominative case,) and says, *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. But, as he immediately subjoins, glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.* There is, moreover, as I would observe in the third place, a peculiarity in the construction of the whole passage, such as the attentive reader of scripture will often have occasion to remark, by which a peculiar prominence or distinction is given to those blessed and consoling truths on which the apostle would have the believer chiefly dwell. Not only, as you have seen, does he avoid any express mention of eternal death, but he begins and ends the sentence with speaking of the gracious promises of God; and he assigns, as it were, a subordinate place to the terrors of his wrath. He tells us, indeed, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish* are reserved for *every soul of man that doeth evil*; but this awful declaration is preceded by the assurance that, *to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, God will render eternal life*; and it is followed by the promise of *glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.* In all this, the apostle seems emphatically to remind us that judgment is God's "strange work,"¹ and that mercy is

¹ See Isa. xxviii. 21.

first and last in his counsels for the children of men.

The representation contained in the above passage of the opposite characters of those who “serve God,” and those who “serve him not,”² is peculiarly forcible and just. The servants of God are they who, *by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality*; being persons who, under all the trials, and amidst all the changes of life, manifest a patient submission and an entire unreserved obedience to the will of God. But of others it is said, that they are *contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*; in other words, that they invariably evince a murmuring and rebellious spirit; a spirit which quarrels with the dispensations, and practically renounces the authority of God.

It remains only that I direct your attention to the words of the eleventh verse; *for there is no respect of persons with God*. If you examine the passages of scripture where God is said to be *no respecter of persons*, you will find that this character is ascribed to him, not directly as he is creator, but rather as he is ruler and judge, and the dispenser of rewards and punishments. His giving to his creatures more or less; his placing them here or there, when he calls them into being, is according to his own sovereign pleasure; and what is here called *respect of persons*,

² Mal. iii. 18.

does not bear upon this exercise of his sovereign power. But in his behaviour towards his creatures, consequent, so to speak, on their behaviour towards him, he represents himself as acting by the plainest rules of justice and equity; and in making this declaration, therefore, concerning God, as judge, that *he is no respecter of persons*, the apostle shews the Jews their folly in expecting favour, at the last judgment, only because they had Abraham for their father, and were themselves members of God's visible church.² And do you not feel, my Christian brethren, as you dwell upon these words, that they utter a voice of solemn warning to all who are living in the full light of the gospel dispensation? For if it be true that God is *no respecter of persons*, what remaineth for those who are content to be Christians in name only and in profession, and not in deed and in truth? If it be true that God is *no respecter of persons*, what remaineth for those who, though enjoying all the privileges of the gospel dispensation, and surrounded by the daily and hourly mercies of God, are actually found to *despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance?*

² Jortin's Sermons.

SECTION V.

THE LAW WRITTEN IN MEN'S HEARTS; AND THE VOICE OF
CONSCIENCE.

CHAP. II. ver. 12—16.

THE portion of the epistle which formed the subject of the last section, concluded with the declaration that *there is no respect of persons with God*. And now the apostle proceeds to shew, from the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth verse, that God will fully display this impartiality of administration in the great day of universal judgment. *For as many, he says, as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*¹ I have here taken the twelfth verse in immediate connexion with the sixteenth; and the same construction of the passage is followed in our authorized version, where the three intermediate verses are marked as forming a parenthesis, and as bearing, therefore, only indirectly, in the way of *explanation*, upon the main argument. *For, (as St. Paul says in these verses,) not the hearers of the law are just before*

¹ Ver. 12 and 16.

God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves ; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.²

In order that you may enter into the full spirit of the above passage, it is necessary, (and this is a remark which I shall frequently have occasion to repeat as we proceed with the epistle,) that you should view it in connection with the general scope of the context. The apostle is shewing that the judgment of God is *according to truth*, and that there is *no respect of persons with him*.³ Now, in answer to this representation of the impartiality of God's distributive justice, the Jews might be disposed to plead that surely the divine justice would not lay hold on them, seeing that God had vouchsafed to them the privilege of the law, by which they looked not to be condemned, but justified. And the Gentiles might plead that, inasmuch as they wanted the written law, they were not liable to condemnation. But what says the apostle? *As many as have sinned without law, (i. e. without the Mosaic law,) shall also perish without law ; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law ; in the day when God shall*

² Ver. 13—15.³ Ver. 2 and 11.

judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Dwell, I beseech you, on these words, and ask yourselves whether they do not convey to you a strong and solemn admonition. You have the law of nature and conscience, as the Gentiles had : you have the additional and much clearer light of revelation, as the Jews had. But above all, you have a law, not only inscribed originally in the heart, or solemnly promulgated by God himself in the scriptures of truth ; but exemplified in the life and practice of the holy Jesus, and written in the heart of every true believer by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sent in the name of his Son, to lead us into all truth.

But the Jews might still object that they, who were in possession of the Mosaic law, would not surely be involved in the same condemnation with the Gentiles. In answer to this, the apostle says, in the thirteenth verse, *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified* ; plainly teaching them that it is nothing short of a *perfect* obedience to the law, which can insure them the benefit of *justification* by the law. There is, indeed, an *evangelical* justification ; for the gospel shews that we are accounted *righteous* before God only for the merit of him who has for us “fulfilled *all righteousness* ;”⁴ “only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own

⁴ Matt. iii. 15.

works and deservings;"^a and of this method of justification the apostle speaks largely in the third and fourth chapters. But he is here speaking only of *legal* justification; and he tells the Jews, therefore, that they cannot be exempted from condemnation unless they perform a perfect obedience to the whole law. Apart from Christ, as the apostle here seems to say, it is only this full and perfect obedience to the law which can present a man just before God. It is not a formal profession, or an outward hearing of the law, of which the Scripture speaks; for "*do this and live*," is the voice of the law, not "*hear this and live*."^b And must we not regard it, therefore, as a fearful proof of the ignorance and perverseness of the human heart, that, as among the Jews, so among professed Christians in every age, multitudes should be found who glory in having been visited with the light of truth, instead of humbling themselves to the very dust for not having *walked*, in all things, as children of light?

To all such self-righteous professors; to all who, in the blindness of their own corrupted hearts, look for acceptance with God by virtue of a written law which they hear and disobey, or of a gospel which they do not practically believe; to all such the apostle appeals in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, and says, *When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained*

^a Art. xi.^b Bp. Hall.

in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. St. Paul here shews that though the Gentiles had not a written law like the Jews, they were not left without a law. For, as he says in the fourteenth verse, the vestiges of that law which had originally been written in the heart, were plainly discerned among them, in that they were manifestly under the influence of a natural sense of right and wrong, so that often *doing by nature the things contained in the law*, they were *a law unto themselves*. And, as he adds in the fifteenth verse, their consciences also testified to the propriety of this part of their conduct, and produced an inward satisfaction; while, at the same time, their secret *thoughts*, or their *reasonings*[†] *one with another*, served to *accuse* or *excuse* themselves or each other, according as their conduct did or did not correspond with their own sentiments of right or wrong. If, then, as the apostle seems to argue, the very Gentiles could not but condemn themselves, when they acted against their own consciences, how absurd and presumptuous must it be for a Jew to expect justification before God, by a law which he is continually transgressing!

My brethren, it is not for us to say how it will

[†] λογισμῶν.

be with the heathen at the great and solemn day of judgment. But we plainly gather from this passage, that whosoever is condemned in that day, will be righteously condemned; and that the heathen will have to answer, not for remaining ignorant of that gospel which they had not an opportunity of hearing, but for violating those precepts of the divine law which were inscribed on their hearts and consciences. Indeed, among all those, of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, who shall hold up their hands at the bar of eternal judgment, no one will be tried by a law which he never knew. For the apostle expressly affirms that the Jews, who have *sinned in the law*, shall be judged by the law, and that the Gentiles, who were *without the law*, shall be judged by the rule^a which they had derived in part by tradition from their ancestors, and which they had strengthened and perpetuated by their own reasonings and disquisitions. But the apostle tells us, at the same time, in every part of this Epistle, that every man, whether Jew or Gentile, who is tried by a *law of works*, will, in strictness of speaking, be cast; because it will be proved against him that he has broken it, and that, ever since the fall of Adam, no one has been able to challenge eternal life by the works of the law. As we shall find him saying so emphatically in the next chapter, *all the world is become guilty before God*;^b and our only hope,

^a Bp. Horne's Sermons.^b Rom. iii. 19.

therefore, is in the mercies of that redemption which is by Jesus Christ.

Yes, my brethren, it is written, as with a sunbeam, in every page of Scripture, that without the death of Christ no flesh could be saved. But who can say to how many, and in what different ways, the merits of that mysterious death may be applied? Instead, therefore, of being wise above what is written, let us take occasion rather, from the passage before us, to bless God that he has been pleased to write his law in the hearts of the Gentiles; and, at the same time, let us reverence the traces of his hand in our own minds; always remembering that the light of revelation was intended, not to supersede or destroy the dictates of natural conscience, but to illustrate and confirm them. And if it be indeed true that the Gentiles, even without a written law, were *a law unto themselves*, the conscience sitting as judge to *accuse or excuse* their thoughts and actions, let us consider within ourselves how inevitable is the conclusion that all who violate or reject this inferior light, and who think themselves exempted from the obligations of natural conscience, will find themselves so far from being *just before God*, that they will be accounted worse than heathens, and will receive a much sorer punishment, in the day when *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*.

. It is the profound observation of Bishop Butler,¹

¹ Bp. Butler's Sermons.

that, from the very economy and constitution of man, it belongs to the faculty of conscience to govern and preside; and that if it had *strength*, as it has *right*; if it had *power*, as it has manifest *authority*, it would absolutely govern the world. Let us take heed, then, how we do violence to this commanding principle, which is placed, as God's vicegerent, within our bosoms. If its voice is heard among the heathen, how much more powerfully should its accents fall upon our ears, when it comes to us armed with all the authority of revelation. For what is the conscience of the Christian, but the Spirit of God *bearing witness with his spirit*,² and writing in his heart all those requirements of the law of faith and love, in which he is so plainly commanded to walk? May we know, while yet our day of salvation lasteth, what it is to listen to the dictates of an enlightened and tender conscience; and may we shew, by a life of faith and love, that we are continually looking for that day when *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ!*

² Rom. viii. 16.

SECTION VI.

CHAP. ii. VER. 17—29.

ST. PAUL APPLIES HIS REASONING TO THE JEWS, SHEWING THEM THAT CIRCUMCISION WILL NOT PROFIT THEM, IF THEY KEEP NOT THE LAW.

I OBSERVED to you, in a former section,¹ how St. Paul, after having shewn, in the first chapter, that the Gentiles were inexcusable in their wickedness, justly infers that the crimes of those who had such knowledge of the truth as to condemn the vices of others, were of a far more malignant character. Now this was evidently the case with the Jews; and yet though, as we have seen, the apostle makes mention of them at the ninth and tenth verses, he does not fix the charge directly upon them until the seventeenth verse, which forms the commencement of the passage to be considered in the present section.

Behold, says the apostle, no longer speaking in general terms, but addressing himself directly and emphatically to the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh, *thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the*

¹ Sect. iv.

*law ; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.*²

In these verses, the apostle appears to address some teacher of the law ; some advocate of *righteousness by works*, who had been producing seven different props of his own vain confidence. In the first place, says the apostle, *thou art called a Jew* ; a name, be it observed, which designates, not only one of a certain nation, but also a professor of the true religion, and a worshipper of the true God. Secondly, *Thou retest in the law* ; i. e. thou dependest on thy outward observance of the Mosaic law. Thirdly, *Thou makest thy boast of God* ; viz., that thou belongest to that people who were chosen above all other nations, and who are in covenant with God. Fourthly, *Thou knowest his will*, not from the mere deductions of reason, but from the books of Moses and the prophets. Fifthly, *Thou approvest the things that are more excellent* ; or, according to the reading in the margin, *Thou triest things that differ*³ The two interpretations may be taken together ; so that the apostle may be understood to say, Thou canst *distinguish* between lawful and unlawful, between what is commanded and what is forbidden, and so thou *approvest the things that are more excellent, being*

² Ver. 17—20.³ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα.

instructed out of the law. Sixthly, *Thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes:* that is, (for these terms, *the blind, the dark, the ignorant, and babes,* were terms which the proud Jews often applied to the Gentiles,) thou regardest thyself as qualified to teach the whole Gentile world. Lastly, *Thou hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law:* in other words, thou hast in thine hands, not only the sacred oracles themselves, but also a compendious system or scheme of that *knowledge and truth* which is contained *in the law.*

Such are the several privileges which the apostle here enumerates, as being claimed by his kinsmen according to the flesh. Now he does not deny the greatness of these privileges; but he desires to warn them against making these or any other advantages a ground of vain confidence. They might glory, for instance, in having a *form or system of knowledge and of the truth in the law*; but, (as the apostle seems to remind them,) they knew not that this would avail them nothing, unless accompanied by such a spiritual knowledge of the law, as should lead them to trust in the promised and typified Redeemer, and not in the law itself. Nay, in this *form* they ignorantly rested, without attempting to obey the precepts of the law, even according to their own exposition of it; as if their work had been to instruct others, and not them-

selves; or as if they actually meant to insult the great Lawgiver by studying His commandments only to break them! *Thou therefore, as the apostle goes on to say, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that preachest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it⁴ is written.⁵*

As the Jews were so apt to rest in their external privileges, St Paul, in the seventeenth and three following verses, had recounted the several privileges which they enjoyed; and having done this, he here takes occasion to show them, not only that, in common with the Gentiles, they had sinned against the convictions of their own consciences, and had contradicted the dictates of their own minds, but that they had sinned, moreover, against all the light and knowledge which it was their privilege to enjoy, and that they had rebelled against the plain and express precepts of their own written law. The language of the apostle may be regarded as peculiarly applicable to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were notoriously guilty of the crimes here enumerated. But the Jewish historian, Josephus, gives

⁴ See Is. li. 5, and Ezch. xxxvi. 20—25.

⁵ Ver. 21—24

the same mournful representation of the great body of the people; so that, as the apostle says, the name of the God of Israel, for which they professed so warm a zeal, was *blasphemed among the Gentiles through them*, and His holy religion was brought into contempt by their scandalous immoralities.

But still the Jews, in the blindness and perverseness of their hearts, might possibly plead their *circumcision*, as a seal of the covenant between God and them, and might thence conclude that they could not be in such danger of condemnation as the Gentiles. It is to “sweep away,” therefore, “this refuge of lies,”⁶ and to awaken them, if possible, to a sense of their danger, that the apostle proceeds, in the remainder of the chapter, to remind them in what it is that *true circumcision* consists. *For circumcision*, says the apostle, *verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and cir-*

⁶ Is. xxviii. 17.

*circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*⁷

The language of the twenty-fifth verse is well illustrated by that passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, where the apostle says, “I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.”⁸ When St. Paul says, therefore, that *circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law*, he seems to argue with the Jews to the following effect : If you choose to cleave to the law, you must *perfectly obey* it, in order to *justification* ; for *circumcision* makes you “debtors to do the whole law ;” and unless, therefore, you look to Him who is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*,⁹ you must acknowledge that your transgressions deprive you of any part or lot in the covenant of God, as completely as if you had never been circumcised : nay, you must acknowledge that *circumcision*, far from being any excuse for your offences, will, according to the tenor of the law itself, only serve to increase your condemnation. While, on the other hand, *if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision ? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge you who by the letter and circumcision transgress the law ?*

⁷ Ver. 25—29.⁸ Gal. v. 3.⁹ Chap. x. 4.

In the appeal which St. Paul here makes to his own brethren after the flesh, there is an evident allusion to the language which he had employed in the first verse, where he shewed the folly and unreasonableness of the Jews, in *judging* the Gentiles unworthy of the favour of God. He had then said, *Thou art inexcusable, O man, who-soever thou art that JUDGEST*; and now, as if retorting upon them their own censure of the Gentiles, St. Paul says, *Shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, JUDGE thee who, with the advantages of the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law? For, as the apostle adds, he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

My brethren, you learn from the passage before you, how St. Paul reasoned with such of his kinsmen according to the flesh, as were content to be Jews in name only and in profession, not in deed and in truth, vainly expecting by their ancient privileges to escape the wrath of God. And need I remind you how exactly this reasoning applies to all in every Christian country, who live on from day to day as if they deemed it enough to have been baptised in the name, though they remain strangers to the grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ! Could the *Jews* have read their law without that veil which infidelity had drawn over the eyes of

their understanding, it would not have been necessary for an apostle to tell them in what true circumcision consisted. And, in like manner, did *we* approach the study of the Holy Scriptures in a humble and teachable frame of mind, under the guidance of that Holy Spirit who takes of the things which belong unto Christ and shews them unto us, we should feel and acknowledge that as he is not a Jew, so neither is he a Christian, who is one outwardly; but that he is a true Jew, and that he is a true Christian, who is so inwardly; from whose heart and whose members the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are cut off; and who, being cleansed from all corrupt affections, and being freed from all superfluity of maliciousness, is indeed dead to sin and risen again to righteousness! This blessed work, sacramentally shown forth in baptism, we are to carry on through life, continually praying for such supplies of heavenly grace as may enable us to mortify every evil and corrupt affection, and daily to advance in all virtue and godliness of living. Or, to express the same truth in the words of our Church Collect, we must be daily and hourly praying for the "true circumcision of the spirit; that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey God's blessed will!"¹⁰ And we may rest quite assured that, in proportion as we thus advance in

¹⁰ Collect for the Circumcision.

the knowledge and obedience of God's blessed will, in the same proportion shall we understand what it is to "seek the honour that cometh from God only,"¹¹ as well knowing that our *praise is not of men, but of God!*

SECTION VII.

CHAP. III. ver. 1—8.

OBJECTIONS PROPOSED AND ANSWERED.

As we have proceeded with this epistle, I have endeavoured to point out to you the admirable skill which St. Paul exercises, in order that he may soften the prejudices, and gradually win the attention of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. It was only in the latter half of the second chapter that he plainly and directly fixed upon them that charge which had been implied, but not expressed, in the preceding part of the epistle; and the powerful appeal contained in that portion of the second chapter which formed the subject of the last section, closed with the emphatic declaration that *he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart,*

¹¹ John v. 44.

*in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*¹

Our apostle now goes on to meet the cavils and objections which, as he was aware, the Jews would bring forward on reading the above declaration ; and the first eight verses of this chapter, which form the subject of the present section, may be regarded as containing a dialogue carried on with wonderful animation between the apostle and his opponent.

What advantage then hath the Jew ? (this is the first objection which the apostle puts into the mouth of his opponent,) *or what profit is there of circumcision ?* If, (says the adversary,) it be really so, that no circumcision but that of the heart will avail to man's final happiness ; if it be really so, that disobedient Jews cannot be accepted, and that obedient Gentiles may be saved ; *what advantage hath the Jew* above the Gentile ? *Much everyway,* answers the apostle ; *chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* Reserving the more particular enumeration of these advantages for another part of his epistle,² St. Paul here contents himself with reminding the Jews of the privilege which they enjoyed in being entrusted with the *oracles of God* ; that written word which had been continued among them through their several generations, directing them how to seek acceptance with God and to walk

¹ Chap. ii. 28, 29.

² See chap. ix. 4, 5.

before him. It must be acknowledged, also, that in one respect, the Jews completely fulfilled the trust which was thus reposed in them; for they preserved the *oracles of God* uncorrupted and entire, and it may not be unimportant to observe that their fairness in preserving the text from intentional alteration, is evident even in those very passages where their own rejection of the Messiah appears most criminal and most unaccountable.

But while they were thus careful to preserve the text of the Scriptures uncorrupted and entire, the great body of them did not believe the things therein contained; or they did not duly consider what they speculatively believed; and so they rejected the Gospel to which those Scriptures were intended to lead. It might be asked, therefore, in the second place, what advantage the Jews derived from the *oracles of God*, if they thus rejected them through unbelief? But *what, as the apostle replies, if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* that is, shall their unbelief be any hindrance to the accomplishment of the faithful promises of God? *God forbid!* (he continues.) *yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*³ Whatsoever, (as the apostle here seems to argue,) may be pronounced concerning men, who must be regarded, alas! as falsehood and vanity, let us humbly acknowledge that the truth of God

³ Psalm li. 4.

and all his words and promises stand firm and inviolable for ever ! To this effect is the language of the Psalmist, *That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged* ; in other words, “ That thou mayest be declared to be most true and just in all thy sayings ; and whensoever any of thine actions are scanned, that thou mayest go away with the glory of a perfect and irreprehensible justice.”⁴ Or, (as the above words may be paraphrased, with a more peculiar application to the Jews,) Let the blame of the rejection of the Messiah rest on them and their hypocrisy, and let it not be supposed to reflect on the faithfulness of God ; even as David, when he had committed grievous offences, acknowledged that God was fully *justified* in his declarations concerning the desperate wickedness of the human heart, and that the humiliating event was permitted to display more clearly the truth, the justice, and the mercy of God, and thus to vindicate him from all those presumptuous charges with which men venture to arraign the testimonies of his word, the threatenings of his law, or the dispensations of his providence.

It is plain, then, that the apostle applies the above words of the Psalmist to God’s general faithfulness, truth, and righteousness, in all his promises, covenants, and proceedings ; showing that

⁴ Bishop Hall.

the unrighteousness of man is so far from making void, that it rather sets off and illustrates, the righteousness of God. But if so, (and thus we come to the third objection which St. Paul puts into the mouth of his opponent,) *if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous?* or, as some think that the clause might be rendered, *Is not God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* (*I speak as a man;*)⁵ that is, after the carnal manner of man's reasoning. Here St. Paul distinctly tells us that he speaks in the character of an *objector*; as if, out of his profound reverence for the majesty of God, he felt desirous of showing that such an imputation as this could not possibly proceed from himself. But the apostle manifests the same feeling still more strongly by interrupting the objection, (for such, after a very attentive consideration of the passage, is the light in which I am disposed to view the following words,) and saying, *God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?*⁶

The objection which was made at the fifth verse is then resumed, or rather continued as follows, in the seventh and eighth verses; *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us*

⁵ Ver. 5.⁶ Ver. 6.

*do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just.*⁷ As if it were said to the objector; Thou wilt still continue to plead for thyself, and say, the truth of God hath gained by my lie; that is, the faithfulness of God has been made more manifest by the unfaithfulness and disobedience of men. Why, therefore, should I be judged and condemned as a sinner, when the glory of God will shine more brightly by the occasion of my sin? Yea, (as the Jews may urge,) seeing that the free grace of God would be manifested and magnified in the pardon of our sins, why should we not continue to sin on, in order that the riches of divine goodness may be the more fully displayed, and that God's pardoning mercy may abound? But the apostle rejects, with abhorrence and detestation, this doctrine and practice of *doing evil that good may come*, solemnly affirming that *their damnation is just*, who endeavour to fasten the doctrine upon the apostles, or, (for the words admit of a double interpretation,) who dare to advance it themselves.

You will observe that, in paraphrasing the above passage, I have considered the term *lie*, in the seventh verse, as importing unfaithfulness and disobedience. The original word,⁸ which is not used in any other part of the New Testament, may be held to denote every sort of departure from truth, rectitude, and honesty; and the whole clause, therefore, may be regarded as equivalent to the

⁷ Ver. 7, 8.⁸ ψευσμα.

expression in the fifth verse, *if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God*. It is possible, also, that the clause may bear an allusion to those passages in the Old Testament,⁹ which contain a solemn promise of obedience on the part of the Israelites. For, with manifest reference to this solemn vow of obedience to God, the wickedness of the Jews is, in several places of the Old Testament, denoted by "lying;" every violation of God's commands having been a breach of their promise and covenant, and so a *lie*.

You have seen, in the above passage, how, under the form of those cavils and objections, which he knew would be brought forward, the apostle exposes the perverseness and corruption of the human heart. And you find it here declared, that from the very methods in which it pleases the Most High to bring good out of evil, men actually take occasion to judge and condemn God, and to harden themselves in wickedness, under the pretence of *doing evil that good may come!*

But this is not all. It appears, moreover, from the eighth verse, that the same impious doctrine was slanderously imputed to the apostles; for I have said that the words, *whose damnation is just*, may be understood either with reference to those who themselves avowed, or to those who slanderously imputed to the apostles, the ungodly re-

⁹ See Ex. xix. 5—8; xxiv. 3—7; Deut v. 27; xxvi. 17.

¹ See Isa. xxx. 9; lix. 13, &c.

solution of *doing evil that good might come*. “Take these words *one way*,” says Bishop Sanderson, “and the slanderer may read his doom in them: here he may find his wages and his portion; the meed and the reward of his slander. Take them in the other sense, with reference to the resolution itself of *doing evil that good may come*, and they teach us that no colourable pretext whatever can excuse those who presume to *do evil*; but that still the *evil* which they do is damnable, and that it is but *just* with God to render to them according to their deeds.”

SECTION VIII.

CHAP. III. ver. 9—20.

THE SCRIPTURES DECLARE THAT THE JEWS, AS WELL AS THE GENTILES, ARE ALL UNDER SIN; SO THAT NO FLESH IS JUSTIFIED BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW.

In the last section I endeavoured to illustrate the first eight verses of the chapter, by showing that we ought to consider them in the light of a dialogue, in which the apostle puts and answers the objections which, as he was well aware, would be urged by the Jews on reading the declaration contained at the close of the second chapter; viz. *that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither*

is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but that he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and that circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

St. Paul had said, in the course of the above dialogue, that the Jews possessed much advantage every way, and chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. The apostle now supposes his opponent to revert to that declaration, and to say, (as we find it expressed in the ninth verse,) *What then, are we better than they?* that is; possessing those advantages of which you have been speaking, and having been preferred to be God's peculiar people, are we in a better estate as to justification by our works, than the Gentiles? *No, in no wise,* answers the apostle; *for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* According to the interpretation given in the margin, the apostle says that he had before charged¹ it, both upon Jews and Gentiles, that they were *all under sin*. But to this *charge* or *indictment*, as preferred in the first two chapters, the Jews pleaded "not guilty;" and therefore, besides the evidence already brought against them from notorious facts, and the nature of the case, he now goes on to establish the charge by many clear testimonies out of the Old Testament. *As it is written,* proceeds the apostle, *There is none*

¹ προητιασάμεθα.

righteous, no^t not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.²

Of the several verses here quoted by the apostle, those at the commencement are taken from the former part of the fourteenth Psalm, and the rest are found in other parts of the Psalms, and in Isaiah. But all the verses here adduced by St. Paul are inserted in our prayer-book translation of the fourteenth Psalm. That translation of the Psalms follows chiefly the Septuagint or Greek version; and it seems that there are some copies of the Septuagint which introduce all these verses into the fourteenth Psalm. Their introduction into the above Psalm is limited, however, to some copies only of the Greek version; and their insertion may admit of the following simple explanation. In the passage of the Epistle to the Romans which is now before us, the other verses quoted from the Old Testament immediately follow the words cited from the

² Ver. 10—18; See Ps. v. 1. xiv. xxiv. liii cxi, Isa. lix. 7, 8.

beginning of the fourteenth Psalm ; and it is probable, therefore, that they were introduced *from this epistle* into the body of the above Psalm by some transcribers of the Septuagint version.

It deserves to be remarked, that our apostle employs different methods when speaking, respectively, of the Jews and of the Gentiles. In describing the latter, he uses the greatest plainness of speech, as well knowing that they did not pride themselves on sanctity of conduct, but were quite conscious that the things laid to their charge were true. But, in speaking of the Jews, St. Paul first describes their character under quotations from their own sacred writings, that so, in the ancient manners of the nation, his brethren might, as in a glass, clearly see the deformity of their own generation ; and then, as we shall presently see, he proceeds to urge the charge home upon their hearts and consciences.

The above quotations were, of themselves, admirably suited to convince the Jews that they were as unable to justify themselves before God as the Gentiles were. For if, even in the days of David and Isaiah, such had been the general character of the Jewish people, it would plainly follow, that, in all other generations, the acceptance and holiness of any among them must have arisen from some other cause than their national covenant and their external privileges. But still it was possible that the Jews, with

whom the apostle was arguing, might choose to regard these accusations and reproofs as applying not to themselves, but to other nations. St. Paul, therefore, follows up these quotations by a remark which, while it is suited to silence all such objections, forms a powerful conclusion to that line of argument which begins at the eighteenth verse of the first chapter, and which has formed the subject of this and the five preceding sections. *Now we know*, says the apostle, *that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*³

St. Paul here reminds his brethren according to the flesh, that the things which were written in the *law*, (or, as the word evidently signifies in this place, *the Old Testament in general*,) were immediately addressed to those who were *under the law*, and who, as the people of God, were enjoying the benefit of a divine revelation; and if, as the apostle seems to argue, the people of Israel, even in the days of David and Isaiah, could not justify themselves before God, how much less would it be supposed that the idolatrous nations of the Gentiles should be able so to do; so that, as he unanswerably concludes, *every mouth must indeed be stopped*,

³ Ver. 19, 20.

and all the world become guilty before God! Therefore, he continues, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. In other words; since *all flesh* is thus corrupted, it plainly follows, that no one can be justified or pronounced righteous before God, by works of complete obedience to his law, whether natural or revealed: *for by the law is the knowledge of sin*; that is, all the efficacy which it has, is only to discover to man his sin, and, without God's mercy in Christ Jesus, to seal to him his condemnation.

There is, moreover, a peculiar emphasis in the first clause of the twentieth verse, if we regard it as distinctly referring to that passage in the hundred and forty-third Psalm,⁴ in which David most humbly prays that he may not fall under the strict judgment of God. The quotations in the preceding verses are, for the most part, from the Book of Psalms; and now, therefore, in closing this part of his argument, the apostle seems to strengthen the conclusion at which he has arrived, by the testimony of the same scriptures. For if, as he would appear to argue, the Psalmist prayed, saying, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in *thy sight shall no man living be justified*,” must it not indeed follow, that *by the deeds of the law there can no flesh be justified in God's sight*, but that *every mouth must be stopped*,

⁴ Ps. cxliii. 2.

and that all the world must become guilty before God?

But why do I speak, brethren, only of the testimony of the Psalmist? Is not the same awful truth proclaimed every where, and in every possible way? We have seen, in the first chapter of the Epistle, what a picture St. Paul has given of the heathen world, as so bent on sin, that they were judicially abandoned to it, and given up to vile affections and a reprobate mind! He has since given us the testimony of the Old Testament⁵ respecting his brethren according to the flesh; viz. that there is "none that doeth good, no, not one." And the Pagans, we know, give the like representation of themselves. For one of their own philosophers⁶ complains, that every one has sinned more or less; and that there is not a man to be found who could acquit himself. It may be affirmed, indeed, that all history and philosophy attest this truth, and that all laws, precepts, and government, suppose it. But the strongest, the unhappiest proof of all is, that every believer knows it by experience; and "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us!"⁷

Such is the language of every true believer; but if we would set our seal to the truth of the above declaration, we must estimate the nature and the guilt of sin, brethren, not according to the low and shifting standard of the world's morality, but

⁵ Ps. xiv. and lvi.

⁶ Seneca.

⁷ 1 John i. 8.

according to the high and unalterable standard of God's holy law. We must feel and acknowledge that any, the smallest deviation from the requirements of that law, is sin! We must feel and acknowledge that any omission whatever of that which is commanded, or any commission whatever of that which is forbidden, is sin! And in order that we may be enabled thus to view sin in all its vast and awful dimensions, we must make it our continual and fervent prayer, that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and through his blessed influences, our eyes may indeed be opened to behold "*the wonderful things of God's law.*"⁸

SECTION IX.

CHAP. III. ver. 21—26.

MAN JUSTIFIED BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH.

I observed to you, in a former section,¹ that it will be vain to exhort men, under the Gospel, to seek repentance and salvation in Christ alone, through faith, unless they shall be previously convicted as guilty of unrighteousness. This the apostle began to prove about the middle of the first chapter; and he closed this part of his argument at the nineteenth and twentieth verses of

⁸ Ps. cxix. 18.

¹ Section iii.

this chapter, declaring, in the former verse, that *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*; and adding, with solemn emphasis, in the latter verse, *Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Having thus proved, negatively, that by the works of the law no person can be justified, whether Jew or Gentile, the apostle proceeds now to prove the affirmative part of his argument, viz. that God hath manifested another way of justification in his Gospel, viz. by faith in Jesus Christ. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*²

In this passage, which closes with what has been well described as the grand paradox of the Gospel, viz. that God is just, and yet the justifier of sin-

² Ver. 21—26.

ners, the apostle speaks of the *righteousness* so clearly manifested under the gospel, as being *the righteousness of God*. It is *his* righteousness, brethren, because it is not of us or of our works, either in part or in whole, but is wholly the gift of God. It is *his* righteousness, because it is that which only God, in his strict justice, approveth, and for the sake of which we are accepted with him. We shall afterwards find the apostle describing it as the *righteousness of Christ*, and the *righteousness of faith*.³ It is *Christ's* righteousness; because Christ, in his human nature, wrought it for us by his obedience to death. It is the *righteousness of faith*, because our faith is the hand,⁴ by which we lay hold of it, that so we may obtain full justification before God, unto life eternal!

St. Paul says, of this *righteousness of God*, that it is manifested *without the law*. And what is this, but a plain inference from what he had said at the twentieth verse, viz. that by *the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin*? As our apostle says to the Galatians,⁵ "The law is," indeed, "our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, *that we may be justified by faith*:"⁵ it shows us our need of that righteousness which God has provided in the person of his Son; but it has not any strength to forgive sin, neither can it enable us to fulfil its requirements, that we may be justified thereby.

³ Chap. iv. 13; and v. 18.

⁴ Hooker.

⁵ Gal. iii. 24.

It is plain, also, that the declaration before us extends to the ceremonial, as well as to the moral law, seeing that the *righteousness of God* is only dependent upon the former, as being the substance of some of its shadows. Yet the apostle, you observe, goes on to say, (and this may serve to illustrate the perspicuous manner in which every doctrine is stated in the Bible,) that though the *righteousness of God* is *without the law*; that is, without dependence on *ceremonial observances*, when considered in contradistinction to the Gospel, and without dependence on the *moral law*, when considered as a title to eternal life; nevertheless, it is *witnessed by the law and the prophets*. For the ceremonies of the law typified it; the very strictness of the moral law, and its awful curses, when compared with the promises of mercy to sinners, implied it; the promises and predictions of the Messiah bare witness to it; the faith and hope of ancient believers recognized it; and the whole of the elder dispensation, when rightly understood, taught men to expect and depend on it.³

Of this *righteousness of God*, so remarkably attested by *the law and the prophets*, St. Paul goes on to say, that it is *by faith of Jesus Christ*, (or, *by faith in Jesus Christ*,) *unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. Observe, on the one hand, how the apostle

³ Scott in loc.

here describes this *righteousness*, not only as manifested *unto all*, but as placed, also, like a pure, complete, and glorious robe, *upon all them that believe*. Observe, on the other hand, how emphatically the apostle declares, of this *righteousness*, that it is unto ALL and upon ALL *them that believe*, whether Jew⁶ or Gentile; *for there is no difference; for ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. In other words, *all* have come short of that perfect obedience whereby they should glorify God; *all* have lost his glorious image; and *all* have forfeited that glorious felicity, which was annexed to perfect obedience as its reward.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, the awful character of this declaration, as to the *universality* of the disease, viz. that ALL *have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; and thus learn to estimate the full blessedness of the scene which now opens upon you, when the apostle goes on to assure *all*, who have been brought to feel their need of a Saviour, (and I lay an emphasis on the word ALL, because it is evident that the apostle here speaks of the remedy as being co-extensive with the disease,) that they are *justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*.

If you take these words from the context in which they are placed, you will say, perhaps, that there is a redundancy in the apostle's language, when he speaks of our being justified *freely, by*

⁶ See Chap. x. 12.

God's grace. But if you look to the whole of the passage in which the words occur; if you consider how the apostle has said that *all are under sin*, that *every mouth must be stopped*, and *all the world become guilty before God*, and that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*,⁷ you will readily admit, that if we are to be justified before God, it must indeed be **FREELY, BY HIS GRACE, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

Him, says the apostle, in the expressive language of the twenty-fifth verse, *God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* Now if, with some, we view the word here translated *propitiation*,⁸ as referring to the *propitiatory cover* or *mercy seat* in the tabernacle, we must consider the apostle, (in allusion to the cover of the ark, on which the glory of the Lord received the atonements made by the high priests on the day of expiation, and from which God dispensed pardon to the people,) to be here representing Christ, as a *propitiatory*, or *mercy seat*, *set forth* by God for receiving the worship of men, and for dispensing pardon to them. But if, with others, we regard the word as denoting a *propitiatory sacrifice*, the meaning of the apostle will be, that, by the appointment of the Father, Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, and that God pardons sin through the merits of that sacrifice. Viewed in either light, the passage strongly represents Christ as the mediator,

⁷ Ver. 9, 19, 23. ⁸ *ἱλαστήριον*.

whom God the Father hath *fore-ordained*,^o and *set forth*, to make a full atonement for mankind. This benefit is to be received, says the apostle, *through faith in his blood*; and, to continue the image employed by the apostle, with this blood the throne of God is, as it were, sprinkled over, even as the propitiatory or mercy seat in the tabernacle was sprinkled over with the blood of the sin-offering.

The apostle tells us, also, in this remarkable passage, that God hath thus *set forth* his Son, *to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*; *to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*. Whatever the Jews might suppose, (and to them more especially this part of the apostle's argument would seem to refer,) the *righteousness of God* was as necessary, with respect to their believing progenitors, as with respect to any other sinners. For in *remitting, through his forbearance*, the punishment justly due to the *sins* which were committed in *times past*, God was not propitiated, in any degree, by the repentance or subsequent good works of his servants, which could not satisfy his justice; nor did he, ultimately, regard the legal sacrifices, which could not "take away sins;"¹ but in all his dealings with them, he looked forward continually to the engagements of the divine Surety of the new covenant,

^o *προέθετο*. See marginal reading. ¹ See Heb. x. 4.

and to the atonement which he was at length to make. Accordingly, as the apostle tells us in the twenty-fifth verse, *at this, the appointed time*, the promised Messiah has been *set forth*, to declare *God's righteousness*; that so, whether in time past, present, or to come, he might be *just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*.

Such, brethren, is the scope of the apostle's argument, contained in the passage which forms the subject of the present section; and it has been truly said,² that we may compile from it a short catechism of the gospel righteousness. Why is this righteousness termed the *righteousness of God*? Because it is he who gives it himself *freely by his grace*, independently of the works of the law. How is it applied to the soul? By *faith* in Jesus Christ, who has purchased *redemption* for us through his blood. Who has given us this holy victim, to die for our sins? God hath *set him forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*. To whom does this righteousness extend? To believers in every age and every nation, even *unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference*; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Why was this righteousness only *manifested* in these last days? Because God would thus lead us to feel more deeply our need of reconciliation with him; because he would thus emphatically declare his faithfulness in the accom-

² Quænel.

plishment of his promises; and because he would thus teach us to estimate the mysterious virtue of that most precious blood, which taketh away sin in every age, past, present, and to come. Lastly, how can God be *just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus?* How can his *righteousness* be so *declared*, as at once to manifest that hatred against *sin*, which demands the exercise of his justice, and that love for the person of the *sinner*, which leads him to justify and save him? How can he who appears, under the law, as a *just and condemning* God, appear, under the Gospel, as a *just, and yet a saving* God? All this is done *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood!*

SECTION X.

CHAP. iii. ver. 27—31.

THE LAW NOT ABOLISHED, BUT ESTABLISHED BY FAITH.

The portion of the epistle which formed the subject of the last section, closed with what I described to you as the grand paradox of the Gospel, viz. the manner in which *God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*. In the five remaining verses of the chapter, the apostle sup-

ports, by new and powerful arguments, this all important doctrine of justification by faith.

Where is boasting then? asks the apostle. It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

In the above passage St. Paul seems to strengthen what he had been saying respecting the doctrine of justification by faith, by these three arguments; viz. that this doctrine tends to advance the glory of God; that God is the God, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; and that this doctrine tends to establish the law.

1. St. Paul shews, in the first place, that this doctrine tends to promote the glory of God. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* The apostle here says, that all *boasting*, whether on the part of Jew or Gentile, is utterly excluded, “that no flesh should glory in his presence.”¹ And if you ask how, or upon what ground *boasting* is excluded,

¹ 1 Cor. i. 29.

he answers, that it is excluded, *not by the law of works*, or the method of justifying men on the ground of their own obedience, but by the *law of faith*, or the method of justifying believers, or “accounting them righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.”² The words which I have just repeated, form part of the eleventh Article of our church; and they may be regarded as a paraphrase of the apostle’s declaration in the twenty-eighth verse, *that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*. For St. Paul here excludes the *deeds of the law*, as far as those deeds are relied on as *meritorious causes* of our justification or salvation; there being but one only cause of that description, viz. the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our dear Redeemer and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

2. St. Paul goes on to shew, in the second place, that this doctrine of justification *by faith, without the deeds of the law*, as a title to eternal life, is strengthened by the knowledge of this truth, viz. that God is the God, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith*. Had justification been by the works of the Mosaic law, of which law the

² Art. xi.

apostle is evidently speaking in the chapter before us, it might have been thought that God was the *God of the Jews only*. But, as the apostle asks, *is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*. For has not the apostle clearly shewn, brethren, in the progress of his argument, that *all*, whether Jews or Gentiles, *are under sin*?³ And was it not meet, therefore, that, since all men had alike departed from God, he should, in revealing a way for their recovery and reconciliation, suit it to the general case of all nations, though special reasons might require a temporary restriction of it to one peculiar people? Yes, says the apostle, *he is the God of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith*. It is probable that the apostle here refers to a passage in Zechariah,⁴ in which the prophet foretels the progress of the gospel under the image of “living waters going out from Jerusalem.” “And the Lord,” as the prophet goes on to say, “shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be *one* Lord, and his name *one*.” This prophecy the Jews themselves understood as relating to the times of the Messiah; and the apostle might well employ it, therefore, as a powerful argument in support of the doctrine of justification by faith. For if God thus emphatically proclaimed himself to be “*one* Lord,” and

³ Ver. 9.⁴ Zech. xiv. 8, 9.

“his name *one*,” must it not follow that, in the fulness of time, he would reveal one and the same way of reconciliation and salvation to “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues?”⁵ If he is “*one* Lord,” and “his name *one*,” must it not follow that he will *justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith?* or, as the latter clause might more strictly be interpreted, that he will justify the uncircumcision *through the same faith?*⁶

3. The third argument by which our apostle supports the doctrine of justification by faith, is that contained in the thirty-first verse, where it is declared that, so far from superseding, it tends to *establish the law*. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* And how fully is this declaration borne out by the whole course of the apostle’s reasoning! He has shewn that this very doctrine was *witnessed by the law* itself. He has shewn, also, that this doctrine differs from the law, rightly understood, only as the substance does from the shadow: for faith points to Christ, as the true *propitiatory*, or *mercy seat*,⁷ typified by that under the law; and it inculcates the necessity of that spiritual circumcision,⁸ or purity of heart, which was typified by the circumcision of the flesh. And it is

⁵ Rev. vii. 9.

⁷ Ver. 25.

⁶ διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

⁸ See Chap. ii. 29.

plainly implied, moreover, in every part of the apostle's argument, that he, whom God has set forth to be a *propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,*⁹ is to be regarded by all believers, not only as fulfilling all the types of the *ceremonial law*, but also as raising the *moral law*, by his own obedience, to the highest degree of perfection. He has, by his obedience, fully *established* the moral law, in respect of its *precepts*; and he has, at the same time, fully *established* it, in respect of its *sanction*, by his propitiatory sufferings and death.

Thus it is, brethren, that we are led to understand, in the full extent of its signification, that declaration of our blessed Lord, which agrees with the language of our apostle, viz. that he came “not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.”¹ He came to fulfil the law in his *life*. He came, also, to suffer, in his *death*, the full punishment due on account of the breach of its awful requirements. And surely, therefore, all who believe in him, who has at once *obeyed* the law, and *satisfied* for the breach of it, must feel and acknowledge that without exact obedience to the law, there can be no salvation. Looking to him, therefore, who was himself “made under the law,”² and who, by perfectly fulfilling that law, has purchased for man a right to the life which it promised; and knowing, also, that by his Holy Spirit, he enlarges the hearts of his people to run the way of his commandments, the

⁹ Ver. 25.¹ Matt. v. 17.² Gal. iv. 4.

believer regards the *law* as having been given into his hands as his rule of grateful obedience, by which he is to regulate his temper and conduct, and to examine all his actions. And though he feels how perpetually he is offending, by thought, word, and deed, against God's divine majesty, he rejoices in the blessed persuasion that he, who, by his own precious blood, has redeemed him from the *guilt*, will answer his humble, persevering prayer, by sending down the Holy Spirit to deliver him from the *power*, of sin.

Well, then, may the apostle declare, of the doctrine of justification by faith, that it *establisheth the law*; seeing that the law, which has been fulfilled by the active and passive obedience of the Redeemer, is now written in the believer's heart by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, and that the believer's *love* of it, and *delight* in obeying it, are the sure evidences of his justification. It is plain, indeed, that, viewed in *any*, or in *every* light, *faith establishes the law*, and places it in a just and beautiful point of view. We see its honour displayed in the atonement, as well as in the active obedience of Christ; and we must admit it to be indispensable, as well for attesting the truth, and illustrating the necessity of the gospel, as for directing the lives of those who profess to receive it. But it is with relation, more especially, to the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, who *rites the law* in the believer's heart, that we may

understand the apostle to say, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* In other words; when we teach that men are justified by faith, and not by works, *do we make void the law through faith*, as if it were of no use, because we cannot obtain any perfect righteousness by it? *God forbid; yea, rather, we establish the law; because faith attaineth that grace* whereby, and whereby only, the law is fulfilled.

Ponder in your hearts, then, the solemn and affecting truth which is so emphatically inculcated in this declaration of the apostle; and consider how inseparably the justification of our persons is connected with the sanctification of our lives. You are here plainly reminded that *faith ESTABLISHETH THE LAW*; and let me now appeal to you, and say, what will it avail you that Christ hath triumphed over the principalities and powers of darkness *without* you, if your own sins and corruptions shall still be suffered to tyrannize *within* you? What will it avail you that his blood speaketh peace in Heaven, if, in the mean time, your own sinful lusts and affections are perpetually warring and fighting against your souls? What will it avail you that he hath taken off your guilt, and cancelled the hand-writing which was against you, and which bound you over to eternal condemnation, if you still continue tied and bound with the chain of your iniquities? To borrow the striking language

of an old divine,³ “ While men continue in their wickedness, they do but vainly dream of a desire to restrain the hands of an Almighty vengeance from seizing on them ; for their own sins, like so many armed giants, would first or last set upon them, and rend them with inward torment ! There needs no angry cherub, with a flaming sword drawn out every way, to keep their unhallowed hands from the tree of life : no, their own prodigious lusts, like so many arrows in their sides, would chase them ; their own sinful natures would chain them up fast enough in fetters of eternal darkness ! ”

This, then, is the blessed consequence of our free justification through the blood of Christ, viz. that, God’s wrath being thus appeased, the fountain which our sins had shut up is now unlocked, and the streams of grace flow forth upon the believer’s soul ! Yes, brethren, the warm sun of the divine love, breaking through, and scattering the thick cloud of our iniquities, now bursts forth upon the believer with “ healing in its wings ! ”⁴ And if we shut not our souls against the heavenly beams, it will enlighten all the regions of darkness that are within us, and will lead us to the light of life, and blessedness, and immortality ! Again, then, I appeal to you, and say ; let us lay these things to heart, and let us consider this solemn and important truth, viz. that whenever

³ John Smith’s Select Discourses.

⁴ Mal. iv. 2.

the sentence of death is taken off from a *sinner*, it is, at the same time, denounced against his *sins*. Let us come with boldness, therefore, to the throne of grace ; and we may be assured that, since Christ has made peace through the blood of his cross, “ the heavens ” shall be no more over our head as “ brass,”⁵ but we shall receive freely the dew of God’s blessing, “ the former and the latter rain in their season ; ”⁶ those blessed influences from above, after which the weary souls of awakened sinners incessantly gasp ! This is, indeed, that free love and grace, in which the souls of believers rejoice ! This is the blessed pledge of their acceptance with God, begetting in them lively hopes of a happy immortality, through the delightful anticipations thereof, which it yields to them in their present life ! In *heaven*, this divine acceptance is the not imputing of sin : in the *souls of believers*, it is the reconciliation of their once rebellious natures to “ goodness, righteousness, and truth ! ”⁷

⁵ Deut. xxviii. 23.⁶ Jer. v. 24.⁷ Eph. v. 9.

SECTION XI.

CHAP. IV. ver. 1—8.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PROVED FROM THE EXAMPLE OF
ABRAHAM, AND THE WORDS OF DAVID.

In this chapter St. Paul supports his grand doctrine of justification by faith by a new and powerful argument derived from the example of Abraham; and the course of the apostle's argument may be briefly exhibited as follows: Abraham, as the father of the faithful, is the pattern of justification to all his spiritual seed, or children. Now it is certain that Abraham was justified, not by works, but by believing the promise concerning Christ. It follows, therefore, that all the seed of Abraham are so justified.

It is to the second of these points, viz. that Abraham was justified, not by works, but by believing the promise concerning Christ, that the apostle directs our attention in the first eight verses of the chapter, which form the subject of the present section.

What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.¹

In the passage before us, the apostle appears to assume that his countrymen at Rome would bring forward the example of Abraham, as strongly in favour of the merit of works. *What shall we say then that Abraham our father hath found* BY, OR ACCORDING TO, *the flesh?* This is the order in which the words are placed in the original, and, taken in this order, their purport would seem to be, “What hath Abraham our father found, either by being circumcised in the flesh, or by his own righteousness and works?” And I am rather inclined to think, with some expositors, that we should regard the greater part of the second verse as a continuation of the objection put into the mouths of the Jews, who go on to say, *For if Abraham were justified*

¹ Ver. 1—8.

by works, he hath whereof to glory. Here it is that I suppose the apostle to interrupt the objection, and to commence his answer, by saying, *But not before God.* And having thus emphatically reminded the objectors that, under any supposition whatever, there could not be any thing whereof to glory *before God*, the apostle now goes on to shew that their supposition with regard to Abraham was utterly devoid of foundation, seeing that he was clearly justified, not by works, but by faith.

For, as St. Paul goes on to ask, what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. These words occur in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis.¹ “The Lord,” as we are there told, “brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” Now it is evident that, in this and the other instances of Abraham’s faith, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, there was a simple reliance on the promise of God, and on his perfections as engaged to perform it. And it is equally evident that *all boasting* must indeed be *excluded* by a faith such as this;² a faith which derives its origin and support wholly from the power of divine grace, and which, by looking

¹ Gen. xv. 5, 6.

² See Chap. iii. 27.

simply to the truth, the faithfulness, and the all-sufficiency of Jehovah, ascribes the glory of all to him, from whom all proceeds. We may infer, also, from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews,³ (where the apostle says of all the elder believers, that they "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,") that Abraham looked habitually to that promised Seed, "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed,"⁴ and who is wrapped up, so to speak, in all the other promises, as the foundation and the root of them all. Abraham embraced, by faith, the promise of the great Deliverer; and therefore it was that *his faith was counted to him for righteousness*; seeing that he was thereby made partaker of that *righteousness of God*,⁵ *which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*. And does not all this plainly shew that it was by means of his *faith*, that Abraham was accepted and dealt with as righteous before God, and not on the ground of his *works*?

Now to him that worketh, continues our apostle, (strengthening his argument by a new illustration, and applying it to all believers,) *is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. By him that worketh*, the apostle describes the

³ Heb. xi. 13.⁴ Gen. xii. 3.⁵ Chap. iii. 22.

person who works in order that he may claim a reward ; bringing those works before God, which, in the expressive language of our old divines, He may regard as *justice proof*. And, on the other hand, by *him that worketh not*, St Paul describes the person who does not bring any work, for which he claims a reward ; but who depends on the gratuitous promises of God. Now, if there were any one, argues the apostle, among the children of men, who *worked* the full measure required by the law, the reward would be adjudged as a *debt* due to him by the terms of that covenant.⁶ But, as we may suppose him to say, how can *you*, who owe every thing to the Lord your God, presume to talk of what is due from God to you ? You ignorantly and perversely rely on the example of Abraham ; but, as I have just been proving, his example only tends to confirm this solemn and important truth ; viz. that *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. That is ; *he that worketh not*, with any aim or expectation of being *justified* thereby, though otherwise he makes conscience of good works ; he, who pretends not to have any works in which he may confide, or which he may bring before God for his *justification*, but who humbly trusts in the gracious promises of him who *justifies* them who have been *ungodly*, but who now repent and believe in his Son ; such a

⁶ See also Luke x. 25—28.

man's *faith is counted for righteousness*. In other words, by means of faith in Jesus, he is accepted and dealt with, as if he had personally satisfied divine justice, and perfectly answered all the demands of God's holy law.

Such is the manner in which, in the first five verses, St. Paul illustrates the doctrine of justification by faith, by the example of Abraham; and, with the view of urging home this solemn truth still more powerfully on the hearts of his countrymen, he proceeds in the sixth and two following verses, to adduce the testimony of David; thus supporting his conclusion by two witnesses, the one *before*, and the other *after*, the promulgation of the Mosaic law. *Even as David also,*⁷ *says the apostle, describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* The apostle rightly describes these words of David, as declaring the *blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works*; for it is plainly a *righteousness* which excludes *works* from the power of justifying. The Psalmist is setting forth the blessedness of a man justified before God; and in doing so, he does not say, blessed are they who have never sinned; or, blessed are they who have done works to cover their sins, and to

⁷ See Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

justify themselves ; but, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

According to the strict force of the original, in the thirty-second psalm,⁸ the first of these clauses might be rendered, *Blessed is the man who is EASED FROM THE HEAVY BURDEN OF HIS SINS.* A burden, indeed, too heavy for the strongest man upon earth ; a burden so intolerable, that God's angels are not able to stand under it. But though no giant in earth or heaven could bear it, a Lamb subjected himself to it ! It was a Lamb, however, " without blemish, and without spot."⁹ It was a Lamb, not burdened with any load of his own sin, or stained with the least spot of pollution. The Lamb of God, the Son of God, who is himself God, is he who takes away all the sins of the world, as one sin : taking the burden upon himself, he bears it, and carries it away ! And how beautifully does the Psalmist add, *and whose sin is covered !* God has not only removed the heavy load from our shoulders, but he has for ever hidden it from his own eyes with that covering of divine love, which is large enough to overspread so many and such great offences ! And, lastly, as if to explain, still more clearly, the meaning of

⁸ 'שׁוּן אֶת שׁוּן תּוּלִית, *abstulit* ; vel, cum de peccato dicitur, *condonavit* : nam remissio peccati est ejus *ablatio*.—Bythner in loc.

⁹ 1 Pet. i. 19.

the above clauses, the Psalmist says, *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* It was with reference to these words that Martin Luther said, with such fervour of devotion, "Smite, Lord, smite, for thou hast absolved me from my sins!" And what, indeed, can be heavy to that man who is eased of the intolerable burden of sin? What can that man fear who knows that God is propitious to him? His wrath is, indeed, the "messenger of death,"⁹ but the "light of his countenance is life." He gladdens all by the rays of his favour; and by one smile he disperses the darkest cloud, and calms the most turbulent tempest. *Blessed, then, thrice blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin!*¹¹

SECTION XII.

CHAP. IV. VER. 9—22.

ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BEFORE CIRCUMCISION, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL BELIEVERS. THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

The last section closed with those words of the Psalmist, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* And the language so employed by David, naturally leads the apostle on to another and very

⁹ PROV. XVI. 14, 15.

¹¹ See Leighton on the 32d Psalm.

important remark, viz. that the *blessedness* there spoken of extends alike to all, whether Jews or Gentiles.

*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, says St. Paul, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*¹

In entering upon this passage, St. Paul evidently intends to meet and confute the erroneous persuasion of his countrymen, not only that righteousness was by works, but that the privileges of God's people were inseparably connected with *circumcision*. How was it then, he asks, with *Abraham*, to whom, as he had been shewing, *faith* was reckoned for righteousness? At what time was his faith so imputed to him? The sacred² history distinctly answers that he was justified at

¹ Ver. 9—12.

² Compare Gen. xv. with Gen. xvii.

least fourteen years before he was circumcised; for his faith was counted to him for righteousness some time before Ishmael's birth; and we know that when the rite of circumcision was performed, Ishmael was thirteen years of age. It was manifest, therefore, that circumcision could not be necessary in order to justification. And seeing that the Jews had the highest confidence in circumcision, as rendering them in their opinion acceptable to God, it followed that Abraham, if not justified by circumcision, would still less have been justified by any other work. But if Abraham was justified *in uncircumcision*, to what purpose, it might be objected, was Abraham circumcised? He received circumcision, the apostle replies, as a *sign* and *seal* of the covenant of grace, into which he had been admitted when he was in uncircumcision; in other words, he received it, not as the *means* of making him acceptable before God, but as the *token* of his being already accepted; that so he might be the *father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also*. The apostle adds, in the twelfth verse, that Abraham received this rite, that he might also be the *father of circumcision*, by which expression we are to understand, not merely that he was the natural progenitor of the nation of Israel, but, also, as the context shows, the spiritual father of all true believers among them; the spiritual father of as many among them

as, besides their circumcision, imitated his faith; or, to repeat the apostle's words, *the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised.*

And marvel not, as the apostle seems to say, that I lay such a stress upon this condition, if *they walk in the steps of Abraham's FAITH: for the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of FAITH.*³ The *promise*, to which the apostle here refers, is in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, where Jehovah says to Abraham,⁴ "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations," or, as it is rendered in the margin, "a multitude of nations." It is plain, therefore, that St. Paul designates Abraham *the heir of the world*, because he might be said to inherit all the nations of the earth, as a seed that should be blessed in him; though, at the same time, the expression may be applied to him as belonging to that countless multitude of believers who may be said to be *heirs of the world*, seeing that in Christ "all things are their's."⁵ And *this promise*, says the apostle, *was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the LAW, but through the righteousness of FAITH:*" that is; this distinction

³ Ver. 13.⁴ Gen. xvii. 4.⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 21.

was not given to Abraham through the law, for that was not promulgated till long afterwards; nor was it given to his posterity as under the law, seeing that multitudes of them would be excluded for their sins, especially for unbelief, but it was given to him *through the righteousness of faith*; and it follows, that they are the true seed, who, through *faith*, partake of the same distinction.

To show, still more emphatically, that *this promise was not to Abraham or his seed through the law*, the apostle goes on to say; *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*⁶ It is indeed sufficiently evident, that if the inheritance were *of the law*, FAITH *would be made void*; and how strikingly does the apostle prove, in the latter of these two verses, that, upon the above supposition, the PROMISE *would be made of none effect*. For were it to be supposed that God had promised to convey the inheritance to them who performed perfect obedience to the law, that promise could not avail them, seeing that none of the children of Adam are able to perform perfect legal righteousness. The *law therefore worketh wrath*, by showing that every transgressor is exposed to the righteous indignation of God; *for where no law is*, argues the apostle, *there is no transgression*; but the clearer, the more copious,

⁶ Ver. 14, 15.

and the more express the *law* is, the more numerous, the more evident, and the more aggravated must his *transgressions* appear !

Therefore, proceeds the apostle in the sixteenth verse, (and oh ! my brethren, how powerfully will this conclusion come home to the hearts of those who desire to lean, not upon their own imperfect and defiled performances, but upon the unchangeable promises and the adorable perfections of God !) *Therefore it is of FAITH, that it might be by GRACE ; to the end the PROMISE might be sure to all the seed :⁷* in other words ; seeing that if the inheritance were by *works*, *faith* would be of no use, and the *promise* to no purpose, God hath appointed it, on the one hand, to be of *faith*, that it might be of free and undeserved *grace* ; and, on the other hand, to be of *grace*, that his *promise*, (which, if it depended on the condition of performing perfect obedience to the law, would have been uncertain and insecure,) might stand firm and sure to *all the believing seed of Abraham ; not to that only*, as the apostle adds, *which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written*, (these very words being part of the promise before referred to,) *I have made thee a father of many nations ;⁸* not only the natural father of one family, to descend from Isaac, but the spiritual father of many nations ; viz. of all believers,

⁷ Ver. 16.

⁸ Gen. xvii. 4, 5.

whether Jews or Gentiles, *before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*⁹ These words, *before God*, seem emphatically to describe the manner in which Abraham is the father of *all believing people*. For they evidently imply a spiritual kindred, such as has place *before God*, in *his* sight and in *his* account, and such, therefore, as makes all believers "blessed with faithful Abraham."¹

Thus are we arrived at what forms the subject of the remaining part of the section, viz. a digression respecting the nature and energy of Abraham's faith. And it is with peculiar beauty and propriety that he now follows up his luminous reasoning on the subject of justification by faith, by bearing his testimony to the excellence of the faith exercised by Abraham, who is the FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL. Dwell then, says the apostle, upon the nature and energy of the faith of Abraham, *who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations,² according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.*³ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the

⁹ Ver. 16—17.¹ Gal. iii. 9.² Or, "that he should become," &c.—*eis τὸ γενέσθαι* κ.τ.λ.³ Gen. xv. 5.

*promise of God through unbelief: but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*⁴

Contemplate, brethren, the picture here before you, and consider within yourselves how striking is this representation of the character of Abraham's faith! It is here said of him, that *against hope he believed in hope*; in other words, that he believed the testimony of God, and expected the performance of his promise, when there was nothing to oppose to the most formidable objections, and apparent impossibilities, but the sure testimony and faithful promise of God. He confidently hoped to become the *father of many nations*, naturally in his posterity, and spiritually through Christ, who was to descend from him; and of this he was entirely persuaded, because God had said that his seed should be innumerable as the stars of heaven. Yet many years had elapsed since that promise had first been given; and he still continued without any child by Sarah, to whose offspring the promise was restricted.⁵ But, though tried by such long delays, and discouraged by such immense difficulties, *he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God*; i. e. he gave to God the glory of his faithfulness

⁴ Ver. 18—22

⁵ See Gen. xvii. 15—19.

and power, and honoured all his perfections by a full persuasion or assurance,⁵ that he, who is omnipotent, could and would perform what he had promised. *And therefore his faith*, a faith such as has been here described, a true and sound and lively faith, which could thus firmly lay hold of the truth and power of God, *was imputed to him for righteousness.*

SECTION XIII.

CHAPTER IV. 23--25.

FAITH IMPUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, NOT TO ABRAHAM ONLY, BUT TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS, AS DELIVERED FOR THEIR OFFENCES, AND RAISED AGAIN FOR THEIR JUSTIFICATION.

The apostle intimated, at the commencement of this chapter, that he did not propose Abraham merely as one of the whole body of believers, but as the *father of the faithful* in every age of the church. But it is in the three concluding verses, which form the subject of the present section, that the apostle expressly and pointedly declares this most important truth. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be im-*

⁵ πληροφορηθείς.

*puted, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*¹

Here, then, we have the grand object of the christian faith; *Jesus delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.* And we are told, moreover, in the passage before us, what it is which constitutes the difference, the only difference, between our faith and the faith of Abraham. *He* looked forward to the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth *should be blessed*; ² *we* look back to him, who having, in the “fulness of time,” been “sent forth”³ from the father, *HAS BEEN delivered for our offences, and HAS BEEN raised again for our justification.*

My christian brethren, in these two brief but comprehensive clauses, we have the sum and substance of the Gospel. For by Christ's *death* we know that he suffered for sin; by his *resurrection* we are assured that the sins for which he suffered were not his own. Had no man sinned, Christ had not died; had he been a sinner, he had not risen again. But dying for those sins which we committed, he rose from the dead to show that he had made full satisfaction for them; that so we, believing in him, might obtain remission of our sins, and justification of our persons.⁴

If we attend to the exact correspondence be-

¹ Ver. 23—25.

² See Gen. xii. 3.

³ Gal. iv. 4.

⁴ See Bishop Pearson on the Creed.

tween the two different clauses of the twenty-fifth verse, together with the force of the original terms, we shall find not only that the apostle speaks, on the one hand, of the *sins* of men, as the cause or occasion of our Lord's *death*, but also that he speaks, on the other hand, of the *justification* of men as equally the cause or occasion of his *resurrection*.

St. Paul first declares that Christ was *delivered for our offences*. Now,⁵ if the single service which Christ has rendered to mankind be, as the Socinian tells us, in the character of a teacher of religion; and if, by the discovery which our Lord has made of the different conditions of the righteous and the wicked in a future life, every man, once brought to a belief of the doctrine, might be reclaimed in such a degree as to merit, by his future conduct, not only a free pardon of his past offences, but also a share of those good things which "God hath prepared for them that love him;"⁶ if our Lord's doctrine might of itself, in this way, be a remedy for the sins of men, and if his sufferings and death were necessary only for the confirmation of his doctrine; then might we admit it to be only in an indirect and figurative sense, that the sins of men are spoken of, in this clause, as having been the occasion of his death. For his doctrine would, in that case, be the means of their reformation, and

⁵ I here give the substance of Bishop Horsley's argument on Rom. iv. 25.

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

his death would only be the means of establishing his doctrine. But if nothing future can undo the past ; if we have incurred guilt without so much as the ability of meriting reward ; if it is only through the power of divine grace that we can think or do any thing which is right ; and if, after all that divine grace has done for him, the life of the believer still consists in a perpetual conflict with appetites which are never totally subdued, and in an endeavour after a perfection, which never is attained ; if the case really be, that “ if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ;”⁷ if, nevertheless, we are expressly assured that, on “ confessing our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ;”⁸ and if, as the beloved disciple assures us, it is the “ *blood* of Jesus Christ” which “ cleanseth us from all sin ;”⁹ then must it plainly follow that the Redeemer’s death was available to the expiation of the sins of men, far otherwise than merely as a solemn confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion ; then must it plainly follow that Christ died to make an atonement for the sins of men ,and that his blood has a direct and proper efficacy to expiate our guilt.

And that this inference is just, appears, with the highest evidence, from that view of the mystery of redemption which the words of the second clause more particularly set forth ; for, as I have already

⁷ 1 John i. 8.⁸ 1 John i. 9.⁹ 1 John i. 7.

observed, the resurrection of Christ is, in this clause connected with our justification, in the same manner as, in the first clause, his death is connected with our sins. St. Paul here tells us that he, who was *delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification*; and if the second clause be interpreted according to the relation which it bears to the first, it will be evident that, as in the one clause, the sins of men are described as the *cause* of Christ's death, so, in the other clause, the justification of man is spoken of as the *cause* of Christ's resurrection. This interpretation would seem to derive support, moreover, from the exact force of the original terms; for it is manifest that they represent our Lord's resurrection as an event which took place in *consequence*¹ of man's justification, even as his death took place in *consequence* of man's sins.

Dwell then, I beseech you, brethren, upon the view which St. Paul here gives us of the death and resurrection of Christ, and say whether it is not here written, as with a sun-beam, that the death of Christ was literally an atonement for the sins of men? It is certain that Christ, in his original nature, as the uncreated Word, the ever-living image of the Father, was incapable of sin, as being far above all infirmity and imperfection. And it is equally certain that, in assuming our mortal nature, he contracted nothing of the general pollution.

¹ διὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἡμῶν.

For the miraculous manner of his entrance into human life, excluded the possibility of his being touched with that contagion. He died not, therefore, for any share belonging to himself of the universal corruption. In other words, he died not for his own sins, but only as the proxy of guilty man. And, seeing that he died not for any sin of his own, there was nothing to detain his soul in Hades, when once the atonement for our sins was made, and the justice of an offended God was satisfied. As soon, therefore, as the expiation was complete, justice required that the Redeemer's sufferings should terminate; and his resurrection to life and glory was the immediate consequence.

This doctrine of the atonement is distinctly implied, brethren, in every part of Scripture; but the substance of all that is written on this solemn and important subject, is comprised in the following words; viz. that he who "knew no sin, was made sin for us;"² or, as it is still more emphatically expressed in the epistle to the Galatians, that he was "made a curse for us,"³ that so he might "redeem us from the curse of the law." And when that mysterious redemption was accomplished; when Christ had thus "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,"⁴ the payment of the mighty debt was *proclaimed* to all by the resurrection of our Surety from the grave. Christ was thus openly *proclaimed* to be the *righteousness*

² 1 Cor. v. 21.³ Gal. iii. 13.⁴ Heb. ix. 26.

of God,⁵ or “the Lord our Righteousness;”⁶ in whom, as our apostle tells us, in the third chapter, *God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth.* And as the *righteousness of God*, (thus wonderfully manifested in the death and resurrection of Christ,) is said in that chapter to be BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST *unto all and upon all them that believe*, may it not be affirmed of Him, who is the representative of all believers in every age, that it was *THEIR justification* which made him triumphant over death and the grave? Yes, brethren, the *acceptance* of the price which had been paid for the redemption of a guilty world, was solemnly and gloriously *declared* by the release of our Surety from the prison of the grave; and in speaking, therefore, of Christ’s resurrection, St. Paul affirms, that he was *raised again for, or, by reason of, our justification*, because that event sufficiently declared the *justification* or *acceptance* of the persons of all, in every age, who have been or shall be made partakers of the blessings of redemption, by believing the testimony and embracing the promises of God, as revealed to us in the Gospel.

Ponder then, one and all, the solemn truths which are now before you, and view Jesus Christ as *delivered for your offences*, and as *raised again for your justification*.

View him, first, as *delivered for your offences*,

⁵ See Chap. iii. 21, 22. 26.

⁶ Jer. xxiii. 6.

and pray that, with your hearts awakened to a full sense of the evil and desert of sin, you may look habitually to that Lamb of God, “without blemish, and without spot,”⁷ which “taketh away the sin of the world.”⁸ Yes, brethren, look to the cross of Christ, and may the conviction of the rate at which you have been redeemed from sin, enable you to say, as others have said before you, in answer to all the enticements of the world, “Except you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to you. Far be it from me that ever I should prefer a base lust, or any thing in this world, or the whole world itself, to him who gave himself to death for me, and who paid my ransom with his own blood! His matchless love hath freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath for ever fastened me to the sweet yoke of his obedience. O let him come and dwell within me; and never let him go forth from my heart, who, for my sake, refused to come down from the cross.”⁹

View him, secondly, as *raised again for your justification*. Contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ thus rising from the grave, and bringing back with him the pardon which he had sealed with his own blood. Contemplate him now, when, instead of executing wrath upon his relentless enemies, he

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 19.

⁸ John i. 29.

⁹ Leighton on St. Peter, vol. i.

sends again the offer of peace and reconciliation to all, and takes upon himself to be their mediator and intercessor, as he had already been their sacrifice; and say, how can you any longer doubt the efficacy of his most precious death? Or how can you ever mistrust the salvation which he offers to *others*, when, by saving *himself* from the power of death, he has given the fullest evidence of his ability to save others also? The most incredulous of his enemies desired him only “to come down from the cross, and they would believe him:”¹ but how much better reason had they to “believe him,” when he came, not from the cross, but from the prison of the grave! How unanswerable was the testimony of God’s love to mankind, when his only begotten and well beloved Son thus came forth from the grave, to proclaim and to confirm to all ages the pardon which he had purchased for a guilty world!²

¹ Matt. xxvii. 42.² See Sherlock’s Sermons, vol. i.

SECTION XIV.

CHAP. v. ver. 1—5.

THEY WHO ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH HAVE PEACE WITH GOD, AND REJOICE IN A HOPE WHICH MAKETH NOT ASHAMED.

Our apostle, having established the grand vital doctrine of justification by faith, upon this immoveable foundation, viz. that Jesus Christ was *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, expatiates, in the present chapter, upon the above blessed theme; speaking, in the first five verses, of the benefits which flow from embracing this doctrine, both as respects this life, and the life which is to come.

*Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.*¹

¹ Ver. 1—5.

1. Consider the first benefit which is experienced by all who embrace the doctrine of justification by faith. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* "Come unto me," says the same Lord Jesus Christ, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."² Such, brethren, is the Saviour's invitation to all who, having been awakened to a sense of their condition, and finding that the conviction of their unworthiness weigheth down their souls, are longing to exchange that *carnal mind, which is enmity against God*, for that *spiritual mind which is life and peace*³ And to all such how blessed is the declaration, that when they take upon them Christ's easy yoke and light burthen, to follow him in lowliness, patience, and love, the controversy which sin had occasioned is utterly at an end, and that through the great Mediator they enter into peace!

2. But to show yet more strongly the blessedness of those who are justified by faith, St. Paul goes on to say, in the person of all believers, *By him also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*: that is; as the words may be paraphrased, *by him also*, in addition to reconciliation with God, we have access, by the same faith, into

² Matt. xi. 28, 29.

³ Chap. viii. 6, 7.

the *grace* and favour of God, *wherein we stand*; so that we are no longer regarded as “children of wrath,”⁴ but as dear children, *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*.⁵ For to have access, by faith, into the *grace* and *favour* of God, what is it but to have liberty, in all our wants, and amidst all the trials and sorrows of life, to approach him as a kind and tender father, reconciled unto us in Christ Jesus, and “not imputing our trespasses unto us?”⁶ It appears, then, from the representation which is here given to us of the believer’s privileges, that he is not only reconciled to God, but actually admitted into his presence. It appears that the believer is not only pardoned, but so honoured, as a *child of God*, and *joint heir with Christ*, that he may at all times have access to his God, and be admitted, by faith, to walk daily and hourly in the light of his countenance. Observe, however, with what emphasis the apostle says, *this grace wherein we STAND, OR REMAIN FIRM*. We find this word⁷ used in the same connection in other passages of the apostolical epistles, as if to remind the early converts that they were to *stand firm* in the midst of the persecutions with which they were assailed. And need I add how forcibly this exhortation applies to believers in every age, and in all states and conditions of life, calling upon them “not to cast away their confi-

⁴ Eph. ii. 3.⁵ Chap. viii. 17.⁶ 2 Cor. v. 19.⁷ εστηκαμεν. See 1 Cor. xv. 1. 1 Pet. v. 12.

dence which hath great recompence of reward,"^a but to remember that they are made "partakers of Christ, if," under all the trials, and amidst all the difficulties of their earthly pilgrimage, "they hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end."^b

3. My brethren, let us thus *stand firm* in the *grace* into which we have been admitted *by faith*, and then we shall know what it is to experience that which the apostle mentions, in the third place, as a higher degree of the blessedness of the justified; viz. to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. This clause might be rendered, more strictly, WE BOAST^c *in hope of the glory of God*; this *boasting* of the Christians being evidently placed in contrast with the *boasting* of the Jews referred to in the second and third chapters.^d We *boast*, as the apostle here seems to say, not in any external privileges, or in any works that we can do, stained as they are with imperfection and defilement; but WE BOAST OR REJOICE *in hope of the glory of God*. The happiness of heaven is here called, by way of eminence, the *glory of God*, as if to imply that the divine glory, which shines through the whole universe, is there collected, as the light is collected in the sun. It is in heaven that the *glory of God* is fully displayed. His *wisdom* is there openly manifested and revealed, without a cloud

^a Heb. x. 35.^b Heb. iii. 14.^c καυχώμεθα.^d Chap. ii. 23, and iii. 27.

to obscure it. There is the glory of his *power* seen in removing every evil, in creating every good, in enlarging the capacities of his creatures to enjoy perfect happiness, and in so uniting them and assimilating them with each other, that there shall be no possibility of jar or discord. There is the glory of his *goodness* displayed, pouring out mercies and blessings in rich profusion; mercies and blessings unknown before, and so numerous as to manifest the infinite bounty of his love. In a word, there all the attributes of the Deity meet together, in all the resplendent lustre of *glory*, and give a denomination to the place from the communication of the fulness of the perfections of the divine presence! ³

4. But we are told, brethren, in every page of the Gospel of Christ, that we must, “through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God;” ⁴ and the apostle, therefore, now goes on to show, not only that Christians *rejoice* or *exult in hope of the glory of God*, in the very face of present afflictions, but that they even *glory in the tribulations themselves*, as the means of spiritual improvement; as the school of holy discipline in which the believer’s soul is fitted and prepared for heaven! *And not only so*, continues St. Paul, *but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; be-*

³ Venn’s Sermons, vol. iii.

⁴ Acts xiv. 22.

cause the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.⁵ The apostle speaks, elsewhere,⁶ of the divine chastisements as “yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby;” and here he exhibits to us that blessed fruit, as consisting in *patience, experience, and hope, even a hope that maketh not ashamed*. We glory, says St. Paul, in tribulations, knowing that in God’s children, (for of such only is the apostle here speaking,) *tribulation worketh patience*; even as the rough block is wrought into a beautiful statue by the chisel and labour of the statuary.⁷ *And patience worketh experience*: that is; the season of christian suffering works in believers, an experimental acquaintance with *themselves*, and with *God*. It works, first, an experimental acquaintance with *themselves*; so that, when exercised with afflictions, they have a large experience both of their corruptions and of their graces. For, on the one hand, their afflictions lead them to feel and acknowledge that blindness and perverseness of heart, which had hitherto, perhaps, been concealed from their knowledge, and to mourn over that weakness of their corrupted nature, which renders them so unable to bear, and so apt to faint under the burthens of their trials. And, on the other hand, they have, in their afflictions, a blessed experience of their love

⁵ Ver. 3—5.⁶ Heb. xii. 11.⁷ Scott in loc.

to God, and of the reality and power of divine grace in their hearts. But this is not all; for *patience in tribulation*⁸ worketh in believers an experimental acquaintance, not only with *themselves*, but with *God*. When under his chastising hand, they acknowledge and adore, from the very ground of their hearts, his faithfulness to his promises, his readiness to answer their prayers, and, above all, the love which he manifests to them in thus *conforming them to the image of his Son*, and thereby emboldening them to cry, *Abba Father*.⁹ And if such is the character, such the salutary operation of christian *experience*, well may the apostle say of it that it *worketh hope*. For surely, brethren, if, under the “ trials of affliction,”¹ with which it may please God to visit us, we shall become experimentally acquainted with our own helplessness, and with the goodness, the faithfulness, and the power of God, we shall have abundant cause to *rejoice in HOPE of the glory of God!*

Thus does the apostle show how those afflictive dispensations, through which believers are appointed to pass, yield a large increase of that blessed *hope* which he has already described as the crowning privilege of those who are *justified by faith*. In the affecting passage before us, we behold, as it were, a “ ladder set up on the earth,

⁸ Chap. xii. 12.

⁹ See Chap. viii. 29 and 15.

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 2.

and the top of it reaching to heaven:"² or, to borrow the illustration of the Psalmist, we here behold the manner in which Christians are commanded and enabled to go on "from strength to strength," i. e. from *tribulation* to *patience*, from *patience* to *experience*, and from *experience* to *hope*, "until every one of them appeareth before God in Zion."³

5. And now it is that, having thus directed our attention to that glorious *hope*, which grows out of an experimental acquaintance with God and with ourselves, the apostle emphatically declares, respecting it, that, unlike the baseless confidence of the children of this world, *it maketh not ashamed*; because, as he goes on to say, *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us*. St. Paul seems here to speak of believers as actually having within themselves the very beginning of that heaven after which *hope* aspires. For the *love of God* toward them, in the full manifestation of which the blessedness of heaven consists, is *shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them*. God loved us, it is true, brethren, before the foundation of the world; but, to adopt the striking illustration of an old commentator,⁴ as the costly and precious ointment spoken of by the Evangelists,⁵ gave no fragrance while it was in the box, but being "*shed*" and poured out, did yield

² Gen. xxviii. 12. ³ Psalm lxxxiv. 7. ⁴ T. Wilson in loc.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 7. Mark xiv. 3. John xii. 3.

a most refreshing and delightful odour to all who were in the room ; even so, the love of God, while shut up in his decree, is not felt by his children ; but when the soul has embraced the promises of salvation by Jesus Christ, then it is that his love is as “ ointment poured forth,”⁶ to comfort, strengthen, and refresh the believer, amidst all the dangers, and under all the trials and bereavements, of his earthly pilgrimage.

In interpreting the above verse, I have considered the expression of the *love of God*, as denoting here the love which God manifests towards us in his Son ; for this is the love spoken of in the passage⁷ which will form the subject of the next section, and it is plain that our *hope* is firm and unshaken, not because *we love God*, but because *God loveth us* ! But we are, at the same time, plainly taught, in the verse before us, that the *sense* of this love is wrought in the believer’s heart *by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us* ; and it is evident that the *sense* of God’s love will, under the blessed influences of the same Holy Spirit, work in the believer’s heart a fervent and unfeigned *love to God*, teaching him to feel the force of St. John’s declaration, that “ we love God, because he first loved us.”⁸ And, in truth, it is only our *love to God*, as written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which clearly and indisputably proves that we

⁶ Sol. Song, i. 3.

⁷ See verses 6 and 8.

⁸ 1 John iv. 19.

really enjoy a *hope* which shall never make us *ashamed*.

Yes, brethren, we may rest assured that the sweet persuasion of God's love to us, will always be accompanied by our love of his holy name. And if we desire to know, therefore, whether we really understand the unutterable love of God to man, as manifested in the redemption of the world, let us continually ask ourselves, whether the loving-kindness of God has been so discovered to us, and whether, through the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, it has been so shed abroad in our hearts, and so poured forth through all the faculties of our souls, as to produce a conformity to the Saviour's image; a love of the divine perfections; a lively gratitude for God's mercies; a zeal for his glory; a delight in his service; and, to crown all, a continual increase of joyful *hope*, arising from the full persuasion that he, who has done such great things for us, cannot leave us or forsake us in time or in eternity! And think not, I beseech you, that it is presumption in the believer thus to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. No, brethren, it would be presumption to lean upon our own strength and wisdom; upon our own merits and works: but to rest stedfastly upon the mercy and truth of God, is the duty of christian *hope*; and how is it possible, that the children of God should have a growing acquaintance, from day to day, with the riches of his goodness, without *rejoicing*, from day

to day, *in hope of the glory of God*, and without feeling that this is a *hope which maketh not ashamed?*

SECTION XV.

CHAP. v. ver. 6—11.

IF RECONCILED, WHEN ENEMIES, BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST,
MUCH MORE SHALL WE BE SAVED, BEING RECONCILED.

The passage, selected as the subject of the last section, closed with the declaration made by the apostle in the name of all true believers, that the *love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us*. To strengthen and illustrate the above declaration, by enlarging on the highest and most affecting exhibition of that unutterable love, St. Paul thus proceeds;

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*¹

The first subject here brought before us, is the consideration of the *love of God*, as manifested in giving his only-begotten Son to die for a guilty world. *For when we were yet without strength, says the apostle, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*²

In order that you may understand the full emphasis of the language employed in this passage, you must attend to that which forms so important and instructive a feature in the sacred writings,³ viz. the manner in which the different clauses of a verse, or the different verses of a passage, are frequently constructed, so that the one shall rise above the other in energy of expression. Now, in the opening verse of this passage, you will observe that

¹ Ver. 6—11.

² Ver. 6—8.

³ See Jebb's "Sacred Literature."

one clause manifestly rises above the other in representing man's fallen condition. Those for whom *Christ died*, are spoken of at first as the *weak*, or *without strength*, and then as the *ungodly*. They were *without strength*, says the apostle, lying in the ruins of the fall, under deserved wrath, and under the power of sin and Satan, and utterly unable to deliver themselves. They had neither natural power for so arduous work, had they been inclined to undertake it; nor moral ability or inclination to attempt it. And with regard to those who were *under the law*⁴ they felt that it served only to convince them the more plainly of their "transgressions," for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*; and while, therefore, in dependence upon their own unassisted strength, they vainly endeavoured to fulfil its requirements, they became the more fully and experimentally acquainted with their own *weak* and *helpless* condition. But *Christ died*, as the apostle adds, not only for those who were *without strength*, but for the *ungodly*. In other words, those for whom he died, were not only impotent and helpless, but disposed, in the blindness and perverseness of their corrupted nature, to "live without God in the world."⁵

And now it is that, to heighten the representation of the *love of God*, as manifested in the re-

⁴ See chap. iii. 19, 20; and Gal iii. 19.

⁵ Eph. ii. 12.

demption of the world, St. Paul appeals to our own experience, and says, *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* The observation which I have made respecting the sixth verse, applies with all its force to the seventh, in which the last clause evidently rises above the first in energy and emphasis of expression. By the *righteous* or *just man*, spoken of in the first clause, we are to understand the man who punctually and scrupulously discharges the duties which may be strictly and legally required of him; while by the *good man*, spoken of in the last clause, we are to understand the man whose heart is so filled with a sense of the divine mercies, that it overflows with love to all around him, abounding, daily and hourly, "in every good word and work."⁶ Now scarcely for a JUST MAN, says the apostle, *will one die, yet peradventure for THE GOOD MAN*, (for it is worthy of remark, that the Greek article,⁷ which is omitted in the first, is inserted in the second clause,) *some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* If, as the apostle seems to argue, you look around you in the world, where will you find a

⁶ 2 Thes. ii. 17.

⁷ ὑπὲρ δικαίων ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀυδαίου.

person ready to die for a *just man*? Nay, is it more than a remote probability, a mere *perhaps*, that you will find a person willing to die, even for that rare character, *the good man*? even for the man whose *goodness* is acknowledged by all? even for the common friend and benefactor? But if you turn now to the contemplation of the love of Christ, you will find that he died for those who not only were not *good*, but who were not even *just*; he died for the *weak*, for the *ungodly*, yea, for *sinner*s!

The apostle, having thus spoken of the Saviour's dying love, now goes on to show how strong is the assurance which the believer derives from Christ's death, with regard to his complete salvation. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*⁸ Surely, (as St. Paul may be here understood to say,) it is infinitely more amazing, that the Son of God should die to turn away the divine displeasure, and thus to reconcile *enemies* to God, than that, having subdued their hearts by his dying love, and procured their acceptance with God as the purchase of his blood, he should employ his recovered life and mediatorial power for their protection and complete salvation? Let

⁸ Ver. 9 and 10.

every believer, therefore, put the question home to his own heart, and say, Did he, the only begotten of the Father, do so much for us when we were *enemies*, and will he not accomplish the rest for us, now that we are adopted into the family of God? Will not the living Lord complete the purpose of his dying love, by saving all true believers to the utmost, until his finished ransom on the cross shall terminate in their finished salvation? Yes, brethren, if we are brought into a state of salvation by the death of Christ; if our guilt is done away, and if our persons are *justified* by that stupendous sacrifice, which is a mystery of humiliation and self-abasement; what may we not expect from his resurrection, that mystery of omnipotence, and majesty, and glory? If it is his *death* which has restored us to the favour of an offended God; it is his *life* which works, in every believing heart, the life of *grace* and *glory*. He is now the fountain of the life of *grace* in the hearts of believers; for he lives in them, and transforms them more and more to his own image. And he will be, hereafter, the fountain of the life of *glory*; for it is said of all, who shall attain to the heavenly inheritance, that they shall be "like him,"⁹ for they shall "see him as he is." So that, whether believers look to this life, or the life to come, they feel persuaded that "because he lives, they shall live also."¹

⁹ 1 John iii. 2.¹ John xiv. 19.

At the beginning of this section, I pointed out the gradation observable in the two clauses of the sixth verse; and I would now observe to you that, in the eighth and tenth verses, the apostle has employed terms still more emphatically descriptive of the misery of our fallen condition. Those for whom Christ died are not only *without strength*, and *ungodly*: they are also *sinners*, *i. e.* not only negatively, but positively and actually wicked; and, to complete the picture, they are *enemies*, *i. e.* in open, determined warfare against God, and goodness! And *if*, therefore, as the apostle so powerfully argues, *when we were ENEMIES, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life!*

But not resting here, St. Paul seems to soar, in the following verse, to the utmost height of devout and rapturous meditation, saying, *And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*² That is; as we may interpret the apostle's language, It is much to be *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*; it is much also to look forward to eternal, complete salvation;³ but while we contemplate the whole scheme of redemption, as the pledge of our heavenly Father's love; as the fruit and manifestation of his good will to his rebellious

² Ver. 11.³ See Ver. 10 and 2.

creatures, what an unspeakable privilege it is to have within us, even now, that well-spring of peace, and confidence, and joy, by which the holy Spirit enables us to cry, *Abba, Father*, and thus continually witnesses with our spirit, that we are indeed *the children of God* ! ⁴

We have seen, brethren, how the apostle, in describing the misery of our fallen condition, employs terms which rise one above the other, in force and energy of expression. And I would now observe, that he has used a similar gradation of terms in describing the privileges and blessedness of the justified. In the second verse, he says, in the person of all true believers, *we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. And, as he goes on to say in the third verse, *not only so, but we glory, or rejoice, in tribulations also*. And now, as St. Paul dwells on the sure pledge of future and complete salvation which believers enjoy, in contemplating the love of God through Christ, he declares, not only that he and all established believers *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, in their *tribulations* for Christ's sake; and in viewing their risen Saviour as the King of grace and glory: *not only so*, but that they also *glory or rejoice in God the Father*, ⁵ as

⁴ Chap. viii. 15, 16.

⁵ The connexion of the second, third, and eleventh verses, is more plainly marked, in the original, by the use of one and the

their unchangeable friend and all-sufficient portion, *through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have now received the atonement, or reconciliation.* Yes, brethren, when believers thus contemplate “God in Christ,⁷ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” they argue within themselves, and say, Shall the *Father* thus shew his love in his *Son*? And shall the *Son* thus shew his love in *himself*? And shall not we, then, deem it our highest and sweetest privilege, to make a daily and hourly return of humble, adoring love, and, through the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, to *joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the RECONCILIATION?*

same verb, *καυχῶμαι*, *glorior*, which, in our English version, is rendered by different words; as, *rejoice* and *joy* in the second and eleventh verses, and *glory* in the third.

⁶ See margin. *τὴν καταλλαγὴν.*

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 19.

SECTION XVI.

CHAP. V. ver. 12—21.

JESUS CHRIST A MORE ABUNDANT FOUNTAIN OF GRACE
THAN ADAM OF SIN.

St. Paul, having spoken of our enmity against God, and of our reconciliation with him, proceeds, in the sequel of the chapter, to point to Adam and to Christ, as being the respective sources of that enmity and that reconciliation.

Wherefore, says the apostle in the twelfth verse, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."¹ It is evident, brethren, that, in the remarkable course of reasoning upon which the apostle now enters, Adam is compared with Christ, both in what is similar, and in what is contrary.² They are alike in this, that each of them shares what he has with his own. They are clearly unlike in this, that while *sin reigns unto death*, over "every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam,"³ *Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life*, for all who

¹ Ver. 12.

² Beza apud Scott.

³ Ver. 21 and Article ix.

are "looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith."⁴ We shall observe other points of difference between them, as we proceed with the passage before us; and I trust, that, as we dwell on this portion of the epistle, we may be led, on the one hand, to humble ourselves to the very dust on account of the evil and the guilt of *sin*, and, on the other hand, to feel and to acknowledge the inestimable benefit which we have derived from him, *by whom we have now received the reconciliation.*⁵

You will observe, in your Bibles, that the thirteenth and four following verses are marked as being in a parenthesis. And accordingly you will find the construction of the whole passage more simple and perspicuous, if you consider St. Paul as resuming the comparison at the eighteenth verse, and as occupying the intermediate verses, first, in proving our union with Adam, and secondly, in shewing what we derive respectively from Adam and from Christ.

1. It is to prove, then, in the first place, the reality of our union with Adam, and our universal concern in his first transgression, (a truth which the proud heart of man is so unwilling to admit,) that the apostle says, in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, *For until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,*

⁴ Heb. xii. 2.

⁵ Ver. 11.

*even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*⁶ The apostle here declares that, for two thousand five hundred years before the giving of the Mosaic law, *sin* prevailed in the world, and was punished with death. He clearly proves that *sin* was *imputed*, by showing that *death* reigned from *Adam* to *Moses*; and, as *sin* cannot be imputed *where there is no law*, it follows that there must have been a law anterior to that of *Moses*, even the original law to which the apostle refers in the first two chapters of the epistle. Ever since the violation of that law by our first parents, *sin* had reigned in the world, *even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*; *i. e.* (to mention only one instance,) even over that multitude of infants who had been cut off, during that period, previously to their commission of actual sin. It is certain, indeed, that in every age, the sufferings and death of infants, may be regarded as an irresistible proof of "original sin," or that "infection of nature," spoken of in the ninth article of our church.⁷ But it was more peculiarly so *from Adam to Moses*, as that law was not then in being which, in some instances, and to a certain extent, entailed the guilt of the parents on their children, "to the third and fourth generation."⁸ In both laws we observe the same principle of *oneness* as to the root and the branches;

⁶ Ver. 13, 14.⁷ Scott in loc.⁸ Exod. xx. 5.

though, under the Mosaic law, the principle was applied only in some special cases, and to a limited extent, while the guilt of Adam extended to all his posterity.

2. In the last clause of the fourteenth verse, St. Paul describes Adam as *the figure of him that was to come*. And having thus led our thoughts onward from the first Adam, who is the original of our natural and earthly being, to the second Adam, who is the author of our spiritual and heavenly being ; he proceeds, in the fifteenth and two following verses, to point out the difference between the *sin of Adam* and the *righteousness of Christ*. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence⁹ death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*¹

Dwell, I beseech you, brethren, on the language here used by the apostle, and especially on the pri-

⁹ Or, as in the margin, *by one offence*: τῆ τοῦ ἑνὸς παραπτώματι.

¹ Ver 15---17.

vileges enumerated in the seventeenth verse, and say whether it does not indeed appear that *the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ*, is far, very far beyond the loss sustained by Adam's sin. Here is *abundance*, answering to our utmost need; here is *grace*, to cover our own unworthiness; here is a free *gift*, for those who are utterly unable to help themselves; here is *righteousness*, for those who are stained with imperfection and defilement; here is *life*, for those who are "dead in trespasses and sins;"² and all this by ONE, JESUS CHRIST. Observe, however, how it is said of all who shall *reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*, that they *RECEIVE abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness*. As one with Adam, *all* have fallen, in him, under condemnation, through his violation of that covenant, in which he acted as surety for all his offspring. And therefore it is that, in our church catechism, we are truly described as "being by *nature* born in sin, and children of wrath." But here mark the difference between Adam and Christ: though Christ was promised from the beginning, and though he hath long since suffered death upon the cross, yet the benefit of his death will not extend to *us*, until we have *RECEIVED* him into our hearts by faith as the "Lord our righteousness."³ Yes, brethren, Christ's *righteousness* and our *faith* must meet together, and when we have thus *RECEIVED the gift*

² Eph. ii. 1.³ Jer. xxiii. 6.

of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, we shall feel and acknowledge that the judgment which was by ONE (OFFENCE,) unto condemnation, is far outweighed by those mercies of redeeming love, to which the believer traces the remission of MANY OFFENCES, (viz. deliverance from the guilt, not only of that one offence, but of all other actual sins also,) unto justification! And well, therefore, may our apostle employ, as he does so frequently in this passage, the words MUCH MORE, to denote the vast superiority of the *free gift* above the *offence*; ⁴ for if any one shall feel prompted to say, Can any thing be *much more* certain, than that all men, as one with Adam, *die*? we reply, with a devout servant of Christ, ⁵ Yes, it is *much more* certain that all who, by faith, *receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* Enoch and Elijah did not *die*, but were translated at once from earth to heaven; and multitudes innumerable shall be *living* when Christ shall come: but not *one* true believer shall come short of *reigning in life* with him! Yea, they shall *reign*, not only here, in the kingdom of grace, but *much more* hereafter in the kingdom of glory. For if *grace so abounds* here unto those who are “*tied and bound with the chain of their sins,*” ⁶ what shall be the *life* and the *reign* reserved in heaven for those who, through faith, have RECEIVED (*thus*)

⁴ See Ver. 15, 17, 20.

⁵ Scott in loc.

⁶ Collect in Liturgy.

abundance of grace, and who are therefore heirs, through hope, of God's everlasting kingdom?

Such, then, are the points of difference between the *sin of Adam*, and the *righteousness of Christ*; but still there are points of similarity which are striking and instructive; and returning, therefore, in the eighteenth and nineteenth verses, to the comparison on which he had entered at the twelfth verse, St. Paul thus proceeds: *Therefore, as by the offence of one,*⁷ *judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one,*⁸ *the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*⁹ As often as I recur, brethren, to the language which the apostle employs in drawing this comparison between the *sin of Adam* and the *righteousness of Christ*, I am the more confirmed in that blessed persuasion which I have long cherished, and which appears to me to derive support from every part of the mystery of redemption, viz. that God willeth our salvation, but that we perversely choose our own destruction! When we find it declared, that *as by the offence of one, judgment came UPON ALL MEN to condemnation, even so by the righteous-*

⁷ Or, as in the margin, *by one offence*: δι' ἑνὸς παραπτώματος.

⁸ Or, as in the margin, *by one righteousness*: δι' ἑνὸς δικαιοσύματος.

⁹ ver. 18, 19.

ness of one, the free gift came UPON ALL MEN unto justification of life ; is it not here written, as with a sunbeam, that, according to the everlasting purpose of God, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus was designed for ALL, that they might be justified? And if *all*, then, are not partakers of this redemption, why is this, but because, as the Scriptures every where declare, there are multitudes, in every age, who “ put from them ” the mercies of redeeming love, and “ *judge themselves unworthy* of everlasting life ? ” ¹ Why is it that *all* do not partake of this redemption, but because there are multitudes, in every age, who TREASURE UP UNTO THEMSELVES *wrath against the day of wrath*, ² and who, “ denying the Lord that bought them, *bring upon themselves* swift destruction ? ” ³ Viewing the passage before us, therefore, as amply illustrating the scriptural truth, that Christ died for *all*, and being well persuaded that if we perish, it is because we are continually frustrating, by our disobedience, the design of that mysterious sacrifice, I would desire to adopt the following admirable paraphrase by Bishop Hall, ⁴ and to say ; As by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, which is Christ Jesus, the free gift of grace and righteousness came upon

¹ Acts xiii. 46.² Chap. ii. 5.³ 2 Pet. ii. 1.⁴ Bishop Hall in loc.

all men, IF ONLY THEY BELIEVE, unto that full justification, which shall be to their everlasting life! For, as by the disobedience of one man, *all the many sons of Adam*⁵ were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, which is Christ, shall *all His many faithful ones* be made righteous.

And now it is that, in closing his powerful argument on justification by faith, St. Paul meets an objection which might possibly be urged in behalf of the law. "If we are made righteous only by the righteousness of Christ, to what end," it might be asked, "was the law given by Moses?" *Moreover the law entered, says the apostle in reply, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*⁶

St. Paul here tells his opponents, that the law of Moses was given, not that we should seek to be justified by it, but, in the first place, that sin might *abound*, or be known to be, as it is, immeasurably sinful; and secondly, that grace might *super-abound*, or appear much more conspicuous, in pardoning and subduing sin.

1. *The law entered*, says the apostle, in the first place, *that the offence might abound*; and in like manner, he tells the Galatian converts, that the "law was added because of transgressions;" that

⁵ See Ver. 19. *οἱ πολλοί*, "THE many."

⁶ Ver. 20, 21.

is, to declare the evil and the guilt of sin. It was in the strict and solemn requirements of the moral law that men beheld, as in a glass, the real malignity of those sins which were committed against so express a declaration of the divine will. And even the ceremonial law, as considered apart from Christ, multiplied duties, and consequently transgressions; as none perfectly kept that law, and numbers constantly violated it. So that, in every sense, *the law entered that the offence might abound*, and that it might for ever put to shame those who boast of their knowledge of the truth and of the law of God, seeing that such knowledge, unassisted by divine grace, only serves to aggravate the enormity of sin.⁷

2. *But*, as the apostle adds, in the second place, *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*, or, as the original might be literally rendered, *grace did super-abound*;⁸ flowing, as his language seems to imply, like the waters of the deluge, far above the summits of the highest mountains of man's guilt and depravity. So that all who come to Christ, "weary and heavy laden"⁹ with their sins, may now know assuredly that, whatever those sins may be, there is mercy with God, more than sufficient to countervail them; seeing that Christ's righteousness is more powerful to save, than Adam's sin to condemn! And this truth is illustrated and confirmed, in the last verse, by the strik-

⁷ Scott in loc.⁸ *ὑπερπεπληροῦν*.⁹ Matt xi. 28.

ing representation of *sin* and *grace*, as two rival kings, desiring to have mankind under their dominion; *that as sin hath REIGNED unto death, even so might grace REIGN through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Observe here, again, how St. Paul delights to enlarge on the subject of redeeming love, and to speak rather of *mercy* than of *judgment*. Of *sin*, he says briefly, in the first clause, that it hath *reigned unto death*. But when he comes to the other clause, he expatiates on the theme which was always so near his heart, telling us that *grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*. The same remark applies to other parts of the passage now before us; and if I direct your attention to them, it is because I am persuaded that the more you enter into the spirit of the language of the Bible, the more you will feel and acknowledge that love surpassing thought is the attribute which shines most conspicuously in every page of the Scriptures of truth. At the fifteenth verse, St. Paul, having briefly declared that *through the offence of one many are dead*, emphatically adds, *much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many*. And, in like manner, at the seventeenth verse, he tells us first, in a few words, that *by one man's offence death reigned by one*; and then, enlarging upon the delightful theme of divine grace, *much more*, he

says, *they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* I would also observe, in conclusion, that while the name of Adam is mentioned only in one verse, the name of Jesus is found in three different verses of the passage;¹ as if the apostle desired to point out, again and again, the remedy which has been graciously provided for all who, feeling and lamenting the evil and desert of sin, have “fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them”² in the gospel!

SECTION XVII.

CHAP. VI. ver. 1—11.

ARGUMENT FOR A LIFE OF HOLINESS, FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

In the argument concerning justification by faith, which has formed the chief subject of the last three chapters, St. Paul has been magnifying the *freeness* of God's grace in the redemption of sinners by the death of Christ, plainly shewing that the works and deserts of men had not any part in procuring this mighty benefit. But he was quite aware that, when he thus enlarged upon

¹ Comp. ver. 15, 17, 21.

² Heb. vi. 18.

*the free gift of many offences unto justification,*¹ some would be perverse enough to regard this freeness of divine grace, as dispensing with the necessity of a holy life. This conclusion he rejects, in the first place, with indignation and abhorrence, and he then proceeds to shew, in this and the two following chapters, that it is utterly incompatible with the whole scope and character of the christian faith.

Observe then, in the first place, the strong and indignant manner in which St. Paul rejects the conclusion that might be perversely drawn from the doctrine of the freeness and fulness of divine grace. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*² We have had occasion to remark, as we have proceeded with this epistle, how carefully St. Paul guards the doctrines of the gospel against all those corrupt glosses which had been devised by the perverse heart of man. When speaking, for instance,³ in general terms, of the *goodness of God*, he very emphatically points out the light in which men should always regard it, by saying, *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?* Again,⁴ when speaking of the *righteousness of God*, as being powerfully illustrated by

¹ Chap. v. 16.² Chap. ii. 4.³ Ver. 1, 2.⁴ Chap. iii. 8.

the *unrighteousness of man*, he shews that he was fully aware of the misconstruction to which this representation was exposed, and which it had, in fact, even then experienced, by saying, *we be slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say, let us do evil that good may come.* And he then solemnly declares, both concerning those who thus wilfully misrepresent the doctrines of the gospel, and also concerning those who dare to advocate such an ungodly maxim, *that their damnation is just.* In like manner, when our apostle clearly lays down the doctrine that *a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*, he guards it against the wilful misinterpretations of men, by saying, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law.*⁵ And now, after having expatiated largely upon the grace of God, and upon the freeness and fulness of that grace, as manifested in the christian dispensation, St. Paul guards against any possible misconstruction of his doctrine, by saying, *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* In all this the apostle clearly points out the manner, brethren, in which we are to answer all objections, and to guard against all abuses of the doctrines of the gospel.⁶ He does not set us an example of keeping out of sight, much less of explaining away, the free grace of the

⁵ Chap. iii. 28 and 31.

⁶ Scott in loc.

gospel; but, while he states this doctrine in the most explicit and decisive language, he shews, at the same time, the inseparable connexion between *justification* and *sanctification*.

The first argument to this purpose is taken from the consideration of the *Sacrament of Baptism*, and it extends to the eleventh verse of this chapter. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*⁷ We are here plainly taught that all who are baptized into the name and religion of Jesus, receive the *sign*, and, either themselves or by their sureties, make the *profession*, of communion with him, and of conformity to him in his death and resurrection, acknowledging that “as he died, and rose again for us, so should all who are baptized die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all their evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.”⁸ This is the language of our own baptismal office; and I may also observe that the exact scope of the two verses now before us, is admirably expressed in the two following petitions, which are found in the same office. “O merciful

Ver. 3, 4.

⁸ See the office for “the public baptism of infants.”

God, grant that the old Adam in these children may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them!" "Grant that all carnal affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them!" Our apostle speaks of the baptized, not only as being *baptised into Christ's death*, but, also, as being *buried with him*; and, again to refer to our scriptural liturgy, the full force of this expression is beautifully illustrated by the collect for Easter Eve, in which we beseech God to grant that "as we are baptized into the death of his blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, so by continually mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him."⁹ The burial of the old Adam, or of sin, is, as it were, the progress of the death of sin, till it be utterly abolished and brought to nothing; even as the burial of the body may be regarded as the progress of natural death, until the body consumes and moulders in the grave.¹ Having thus spoken of the *death* and *burial* of sin, or of the old Adam, as parts of sanctification, the apostle observes that it consists, lastly, in *newness of life*, reminding us that *like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*.

It follows, therefore, from an attentive consideration of the Sacrament of Baptism, as here

⁹ Collect for Easter even.

¹ Thomas Wilson and Bishop Hall in loc.

described by St. Paul, that our sanctification arises from our communion with Christ, *dead, buried, and raised again*; or, in other words, from our fellowship with the *death, burial, and resurrection of Christ*. When Christ died, and was buried, and rose again, he was in our stead, as our Surety and now that he is at the right hand of the Father, he still communicates the virtue of his death, and burial, and resurrection, to those who are *one with Him*, for the destruction, as well as for the remission of sin.

This blessed truth of the vital communion between Christ and the believer, is powerfully represented in the next verse. *For if we have been planted together*, says St. Paul, *in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*² The apostle does not say *planted together in Christ's death and resurrection*, but, as St. Chrysostom and others have remarked, he interposes the word *likeness*, saying, *planted in the likeness of his death, and in the likeness of his resurrection*, to show that there is only a resemblance of these things at present. It is a resemblance, however, such as is absolutely requisite to bring us to the reality; for we are here plainly taught that what our blessed Lord did, and suffered for us, must, in a spiritual sense, be done and suffered by ourselves: we are taught that it is not only an object of our faith, but a rule for our

² Ver. 5.

practice. And is it not here written, also, as with a sunbeam, that all this takes place by the grace which we derive from Christ? We are *planted together*, says the apostle, *in the likeness of his death and resurrection*; or, according to the exact force of the original word,³ we are GROWING AND LIVING TOGETHER, *by one common sap*.

Yes, says the apostle to all believers, by virtue of the grace which you derive from Christ, you will not only die to sin, in conformity to Christ's *death*, but you will also rise to newness of life, in conformity to his *resurrection*. These two topics occupy the remainder of the passage before us; and it is upon the former that St. Paul thus enlarges in the two next verses; *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*⁴ Here, as I have said, the apostle enlarges upon the topic suggested by the *death* of Christ; and how forcible is the image which he employs to illustrate this important subject! *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed*. Our depraved nature is here called a *man*, because it comprises a complete system of unholy dispositions and affections, and because it imparts its baneful influence to the whole soul and body. And it is called the

³ *σύνφυτοι* derived, not from *φυτεύω*, *planto*, but from, *φύω*, *nasco*.

⁴ Ver. 6—7.

old man, because it is derived from the first Adam, and because, “in every person born into this world,” it not only is prior to grace, or the image of the second Adam, but, as our church declares, “doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated.”⁵ Of this *old man*, or our corrupt nature, the apostle affirms that, in all true believers, it is *crucified with Christ*, by the grace derived from the cross. For Christ, by his merits, has obtained for all such, not only remission of sins, but also the spirit of mortification, *that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*. in other words; that the whole bulk of our habitual corruption, prepared, as it is, with all its members, to commit actual sins, might be so far destroyed, *that henceforth*, how much soever we may be *drawn to sin*, we should not *serve sin*, or be the *slaves of sin* any more. Thus does the apostle teach us to regard our depraved nature, as that hated enemy which crucified our blessed Lord; and, accordingly, in the office of baptism, our church, adopting St. Paul’s language, reminds us that we are never to rest satisfied till it has no longer any place in our souls. We are there taught to pray to our God, humbly “beseeching him to grant that we, being dead to sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin!”⁶ And we offer

⁵ Art. ix.⁶ Office for the “public baptism of infants.”

up this prayer, in order that *henceforth we may not serve sin*; for, as the apostle adds, *he that is dead is freed from sin*; that is, he that is dead to the love and practice of sin, is freed for ever from its yoke; just as the death, either of the master or slave, and, much more evidently, the death of both, dissolves the relation, and destroys the oppressive power which had before been exercised.

Before I pass on to the four remaining verses, I would observe, that, according to the more strict interpretation of the original, given in the margin, this seventh verse might be rendered, *he that is dead, is, or has been*⁷ *JUSTIFIED from sin*; and this exact and literal translation may be regarded as aptly coinciding with the apostle's argument; for, as he seems to say,⁸ he, and he only, is *justified* from the guilt of sin, who shews, by his whole life and conversation, that he is *dead* to the love and practice of it. According to this interpretation, St. Paul, by representing our *death to sin* as the requisite attestation of our being *accounted righteous*, carefully guards the doctrine of justification by faith against the mischievous use which has been made of it by those who perversely “wrest the scriptures unto their own destruction.”⁹

We have seen how St. Paul enlarges on the topic suggested by the *death of Christ*; and we are now to see, in the four remaining verses, how he improves the subject of *Christ's resurrection*,

⁷ δεδικαιώται.

⁸ Vide Scott in loc.

⁹ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

reminding us that, by virtue of the grace which we derive from Christ, we are not only to die to sin, in conformity to Christ's death, but that we are also to rise to newness of life, in conformity to his resurrection. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*¹ As we would desire to be Christians, brethren, not only in name and in profession, but in deed and in truth, let us ponder in our hearts the above representation of the privileges of our high and heavenly calling; considering what it is to be *alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, and to *live with Christ*. It is to derive nourishment and strength from him, even as the branches derive support from the parent tree,² so that we may indeed become one with him, and he one with us; it is to "grow up unto him in all things,"³ and out of his "fulness"⁴ to receive continual supplies of grace; it is, amidst all the trials and the dangers of our earthly pilgrimage, to have our life so "hid with Christ in God,"

¹ Ver. 8—11.² See John xv. 1—6.³ Eph iv. 17.⁴ Col. 1. 19.

that “ when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we “ also may appear with him in glory ! ” ⁵

I would remark, in conclusion, that the language of the apostle is evidently designed to represent the *life of grace*, as inseparably connected with the *life of glory*. If we are really conformed to the resurrection of Christ, then, as his argument plainly implies, we shall feel that the work of grace must be daily and hourly going on from strength to strength, until we reach the kingdom of glory. For if it be true that *Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more* ; if it be true that, *in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God* ; it must evidently follow, that all who are really conformed to his *death and resurrection*, will *reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but FOR EVER alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Yea, even as death can have no more *dominion* over HIM who, *after dying for our sins, has risen again for our justification* ;⁶ so shall sin cease to enslave, though it may still continue to vex and harass THOSE who, having risen to a new life, shall fall no more under the thralldom of that hated tyrant, but shall for ever *live unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord* ! Let it be our daily prayer, therefore, that we may *die* as truly *unto sin*, as Christ died *for sin*, and that, day by day and hour by hour,

⁵ Col. iii. 3, 4.

⁶ Chap. iv. 25.

we may *live* as truly *unto* God, as Christ for ever lives *with* God in the “glory which he had with him before the world was.”⁷

SECTION XVIII.

CHAP. VI. ver. 12—23.

ARGUMENTS FOR A LIFE OF HOLINESS, FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE OPPOSITE SERVICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SIN.

In the last section I endeavoured to shew you how, in the first eleven verses of the chapter, the apostle enforces and illustrates the inseparable connexion between justification and sanctification, from the consideration of the sacrament of baptism. In the remaining part of the chapter, St. Paul powerfully inculcates the same important truth under the very expressive image, which he first introduced at the end of the fifth chapter, of *sin* and *grace*, as two *lords* or *masters*, demanding the obedience of those who have respectively yielded themselves to obey them.

Now those to whom the apostle was writing, had been baptized in the name of Christ, and were, by profession, therefore, *his* soldiers and servants. *Let not sin therefore*, as he says, *reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of*

⁷ John xvii. 5.

*unrighteousness unto sin : but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*¹ It is quite certain, brethren, that sin will be always endeavouring to tyrannize even over the people of God. That, as it has been truly said, is *sin's* own work, and not *ours*.² But, in the above verses, St. Paul appeals to the Roman converts, and says, see that sin does not REIGN *in you*, considering always that to the *reign* of a king the obedience of the subjects must, as it were, not only *passively*, but *actively* concur ; for it is the part of a subject freely and heartily to love the person of his king, and to rejoice in his service. *Let not sin therefore so reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin : but yield yourselves unto God.* In these words, *yield yourselves unto God*, the apostle seems to appeal to the Roman converts with peculiar emphasis, saying, God might easily *destroy* you *against* your will ; but it is only with your will, (he himself having made you willing,) that he *saves* you. *Yield yourselves therefore unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

When the apostle here tells us to *yield ourselves*

¹ Ver. 12—14.

² Bishop Reynolds.

unto God, and to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto him, we are reminded of his exhortation in the twelfth chapter,³ where he calls upon us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. There, indeed, he exhorts us to devote our bodies as a LIVING SACRIFICE: here, adopting another image, he calls on us to yield our members as INSTRUMENTS, OR WEAPONS⁴ of righteousness unto God; so that all the powers of body and soul, (part being evidently here intended for the whole,) may be employed in his service, as the instruments with which we may perform all righteousness to his glory, or as the weapons with which we may fight his battles against sin, the world, and the devil. And fear not, as he seems to say, that your former lord and master shall recover his power, or be “able to do you violence;”⁵ for sin shall not have dominion over you: in other words; sin may, and will remain in you, as an enemy or a rebel, but it shall not subdue you as a conqueror; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. That is to say, you are not under the condemning power of the law, as a covenant of works, exacting perfect obedience, and ministering no strength to perform it; but you are under a covenant of grace in Christ, a covenant which provides, through the merit of Christ's death, for the free forgiveness of your

³ Chap. xii. 1.⁴ ὅπλα. See margin.⁵ Ps. lxxix. 23. P.B.T.

sins, and, through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, for the *destruction* of those sins ; so that the spirit of sanctification ever *reigns* over you, as a king reigns over his subjects, “ to support you in all dangers, and to carry you through all temptations.” ⁶

It is quite evident, from the whole scope of the passage before us, that the apostle is here speaking of the law when considered as a *covenant of works* ; but he knew how easy it would be for the perverse disputers of this world to misinterpret his language, by tearing the words from the context in which they are found, and thus depriving them of all their form and comeliness ; and therefore, as if in anticipation of such pernicious mistatements, the apostle thus proceeds, *What then ? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you :⁷ or, as the last verse may be interpreted,⁸ God be thanked, that whereas ye were formerly the servants of sin, ye have now obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

⁶ Collect for fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

⁷ Ver. 15—17.

⁸ See Matt. xi. 25.

The apostle, you observe, *thanks God for the obedience of the Roman converts*; consider then, how necessary it is, brethren, that you should be continually applying to Him, from whom only the grace of obedience proceeds, beseeching him to “enlarge your hearts” that you may “run the way of his commandments;” and consider, also, how you are here called upon, after the example of the apostle, heartily to thank God for every fresh instance of the work of his grace in the hearts of others. I say, in the *hearts* of others; for observe, in the second place, how the apostle speaks of *obeying from the HEART* the doctrines of the gospel, and consider, therefore, how emphatically you are here reminded that, whilst it is impossible for the unbeliever to rejoice from the *heart* in the yoke and bondage of sin, the believer obeys from the *heart* that blessed will of God which is revealed to us in the Scriptures! Observe, in the last place, how the apostle says, *that form of doctrine which was delivered you*; or, as it is expressed in the margin, WHERE TO YE¹ WERE DELIVERED. If we adopt the latter interpretation, we may consider the apostle as employing the term, with reference to the foregoing figure of *servitude*, in order to denote that the converts had been delivered over from one master to another, viz. from the *slavery of sin* to the *service of the gospel*.

² Ps. cxix. 32.

¹ εἰς ἃν παρεδόθητε.

I may observe, also, that, according to some,² there is an allusion, in the word here rendered *form*, to the exactness with which melted metals receive the impression of the *mould* into which they are cast. And this may serve to point out the very important difference between the law and the gospel. The former forbids us to do that which is evil, and commands us to do that which is good, but it does not give us any strength to forbear the one, or to do the other. It is termed, therefore, the ministration of the “letter.”³ But the latter inculcates repentance, faith, hope, love, and all holy obedience, and, at the same time, it furnishes all the gracious influences of the Spirit, to imprint those heavenly graces in the believer’s heart. The gospel is termed, therefore, the ministration of the “spirit,” and of “righteousness;” because it is able to work an entire change in the heart, and to fill it with heavenly wisdom, purity, and peace !

Being then made free from sin, thus the apostle proceeds, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin ye were free from

² See Parkhurst on the word τύπος.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 6—9.

*righteousness.*⁴ I have already said that our being under the *dominion* of sin, consists, not in our being harassed by his hated power, when, like an expelled usurper, he struggles to resume his throne, for such conflicts must continually be waged by every soldier of Christ; but in our willingly submitting to be his slaves. It follows, therefore, that by *being made free from sin*, we are to understand deliverance from this *dominion* of sin, not an exemption from those struggles which it is perpetually making to recover the mastery over us. And, to shew how carefully St. Paul preserves the figure which he is here employing, I would take occasion to observe that the word rendered *made free*,⁵ is the very word by which the act of *giving a slave his liberty* was evidently signified.

When the apostle says, in the nineteenth verse, *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh*, does he not plainly teach us that, in compassion to our infirmities, God calls upon us to do only as much for *him*, as we have done for *sin*? to do only as much for our *salvation*, as we have hitherto been doing for our *destruction*? And yet, brethren, among those who profess to serve him, how few are there who shew, by their lives and conversations, that they have really felt the force of this tender and unanswerable expostulation! Consider, also, how expressive is the language in which this expostulation is conveyed!

⁴ Ver. 18—20. ⁵ ἐλευθερωθέντες from ἐλευθεροω, *libero, manumitto*.

*As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity: in other words; as ye have gone on from one degree of iniquity to another; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness: in other words; strive perpetually for the attainment of perfect holiness; go forward, from strength to strength, in the service of your God, as you did formerly in the service of sin and wickedness. In this exhortation we are forcibly reminded that, if we do not go forward, we must inevitably go backward; since there is no *standing still* in Christian holiness. And if any persons desire to know, therefore, whether their hearts are really influenced by the Spirit of holiness, let them learn from this scripture that the nature of sanctifying grace is to grow and increase to perfection.⁶*

Thus far, it is evident, the apostle's argument is good, even admitting that there were no difference between the two services here spoken of; but now, in the three concluding verses, St. Paul most powerfully strengthens and enforces his reasoning by shewing on which side the advantage lies. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through*

⁶ Non progredi est regredi, et deficit qui non proficit.

*Jesus Christ our Lord.*⁷ St. Paul declares that *the end of these things is death*: and how often, in this life, brethren, does the sinner experience, in the horrors of despair, a foretaste of that death! “Pleasure” says Jeremy Taylor,⁸ “is but like wooden frames, set under arches, till they be strong, by their own weight, to stand alone. Even so, when, by any means, the devil hath a man sure, he takes no longer care to cozen him with pleasures, but is content that he should begin an early hell, and be tormented before the time!” But, blessed be God, the reverse of this awful picture is also before us; for when the apostle tells us, in the twenty-second verse, that while the servants of God have for the end, *everlasting life*, they have, in the meantime, *their fruit unto holiness*, he beautifully reminds us that the reward of serving God is not altogether reserved for the world to come; but that it pleases God to give unto his people, in this life, *FRUIT UNTO HOLINESS*, as a pledge and a foretaste of that full reward which is in store for them hereafter.

Let us now dwell, in conclusion, upon the two clauses of the twenty-third verse, as amply illustrating and confirming what has just been said respecting the difference between the two services of righteousness and sin. In the former clause,

⁷ Ver. 21—23.

⁸ Jeremy Taylor's works, vol. v.

the apostle declares that *the wages of sin is death*: and it has been truly said,⁹ brethren, that in these words we have a close conjunction between the greatest object of the world's love, which is *sin*, and the greatest object of the world's hatred, which is *death*. "We see them, moreover," says South, "so presented to us, as to be on the very confines of one another; for we see *death* treading upon the heels of *sin*, as its hateful, yet inseparable companion! Is it not most strange, then, that men should so eagerly court the one, and yet so utterly abhor the other? Is it not most strange that they should pour gall into the fountain, and yet complain of the bitterness of the stream? And, lastly, is it not of all things the most unreasonable, that a *work-man* should complain that he is paid his *wages*? It is here expressly declared by the apostle that *death is the wages of sin*; and should not this remind us that all who choose *sin*, choose a state of *service and toil*? The payment of *wages* necessarily presupposes *service*; and may we not boldly affirm that the service of sin is, of all others, the most painful and most laborious? It is a service which will engross all a man's industry, and drink up all his time; it will prove a drudgery without intermission, a business without repose. The commands of sin are for their number continual, for their vehemence importu-

⁹ South's Sermons, vol. vii.

nate, and for their burden tyrannical; and such as are the *commands*, such, it is evident, must be also the *service* of sin!"

But the gift of God, says the apostle, in the latter clause of the verse, *is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Mark, I beseech you, the striking contrast between the language of this and of the preceding clause. St. Paul there speaks of *death* as the *wages of sin*, but he here describes *eternal life* as the *gift of God*. *Death* is rendered, in justice, to the servants of *sin*, as the *wages* to which they are entitled. But *eternal life* is what none of the children of men ever can deserve. Our sins, indeed, are our own, and if we contend for our lusts, therefore, as soldiers fight for their prince, we assuredly deserve the *wages* of that unholy service; but who among us shall say, brethren, that we can ever deserve a recompence? much less, that we can ever deserve *such* a recompence as is here promised, for acts not entirely, not originally ours? Who among us shall say, that we can ever deserve a recompence from Him, *who only* "worketh in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure?"¹ Were ours a perfect righteousness, *eternal life* might then indeed have been rendered to us as *wages*, because God had been pleased to say, "Do this and live;"² but since ours is a stained, imperfect righteousness; and since, therefore, in rigour of justice, it deserves death rather than life, it follows that *eternal life*

¹ Phil. ii. 13.

² See Lev. xviii. 5; Ezek. xx. 11; Gal. iii. 12.

can only be vouchsafed as a *free gift*. It is, moreover, as the apostle emphatically adds, the gift of God *through Jesus Christ our Lord*: in other words; it freely descends upon us by and for the sake of ONE, who, by what he himself has done and suffered for us, has fully deserved *eternal life* for all believers. “Lest justice, therefore, should lift up itself,” these are the words of St. Chrysostom, “it is not here said that eternal life is the *wages* of the believer; but it is termed the *gift of God*; and the apostle adds, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, lest life should be sought in any other way than through this only one Mediator.” This is, indeed, the grand consolatory truth of the gospel, viz. that *eternal life is the gift of God THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD*; and therefore not unto us be the praise, brethren, or any part of it; but unto Him who hath thus “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus,”³ be honour and glory and “thanks, for his unspeakable *gift*!”⁴

³ Eph. i. 3.⁴ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

SECTION XIX.

CHAP. VII. ver. 1—6.

THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN HOLINESS ILLUSTRATED AND
ENFORCED BY THE FIGURE OF THE MARRIAGE BOND.

Proceeding with the subject of Christian holiness, St. Paul, in the seventh chapter, explains to us *in what manner*, and *for what purpose*, we are *free from the law*. The chapter may be regarded as consisting of three parts. In the first part, the apostle explains *how*, or *in what sense*, it is that we are *delivered from the law*. In the second, he answers the objection which might be raised against this statement. And, in the third, he describes, in his own person, the believer's conflict between the *flesh*, which resists, and *grace*, which consents to the law; concluding with the representation of the triumph of grace, through Jesus Christ.

The first of these three divisions is contained in the first six verses, in which the apostle illustrates, under the figure of the marriage bond, the doctrine, set forth in the latter division of the preceding chapter, of our being *not under the law but under grace*.¹ *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the*

¹ Chap. vi. 14.

*law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ?*² Having thus expressed himself in the first instance, in general terms, the apostle goes on to illustrate, more particularly, the scope of his question, by referring to the law of marriage. And I may here take occasion to observe, that this illustration was peculiarly adapted to his Jewish brethren, seeing that the connexion of the people of Israel with God as their king, had been represented by God himself under the figure of a marriage, solemnized with them at Sinai.³ Employing, therefore, the same image, the apostle thus continues. *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth ; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress : but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law ; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised up from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were*

² Ver. 1.³ See Is. liv. 5 ; Jer. ii. 2, iii. 14 ; and Ezek. xvi.

held ;⁴ that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.⁵

If you consider this passage attentively, you will perceive that in the second and third verses the apostle introduces the figure of the marriage bond, for the purpose of illustrating the general truth contained in the first verse, viz. that the law hath dominion over a man AS LONG AS HE LIVETH. At the fourth verse the apostle returns to the argument immediately before him, and plainly referring to the above words, says, *Wherefore, my brethren. ye also are become DEAD TO THE LAW by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.* The expressions of *our being dead unto the LAW*, and of *THE LAW being dead to us*, may be considered as equivalent ; and, according to some commentators, our apostle employed the former, which does not so exactly correspond with the illustration immediately preceding, out of tenderness to his kinsmen according to the flesh, who might have taken offence at being told that the law was dead. I would observe, however, that the chief point in the comparison before us, is the dissolution of the bond between the two parties : and it is plain that, on the death of either of the parties, the relation between them must be dis-

⁴ ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ. Marg. being dead to that, comp. v. 4.

⁵ Ver. 2—6.

solved. It is true that the above suggestion derives abundant support from that tender and considerate spirit which the apostle everywhere manifests; but I should rather consider him as here using the expression of being *dead to the law*, with more immediate reference to the argument contained in the former part of the sixth chapter, in which he reminds believers that they have been *baptised into the death of Christ*, and tells them that they must *reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto SIN*.⁶ In *this* chapter, St. Paul speaks of believers as being *dead to the LAW*; and by this he would teach us, that all who are *dead to sin*, are also *dead* to that *power* which the *law* exercises over unbelievers, either of condemning them as guilty, or of provoking them unto sin. But in order that we may be so delivered from the law, it is evident that we must not regard it any longer as a *covenant of works*, but only as a *rule of life*; and therefore the apostle says, *Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God*.

It is, indeed, by the mysterious obedience of Him *who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*,⁷ that believers *are become dead to the law*, as a covenant of works. And when the apostle says so empha-

⁶ See ch. vi. 1—11.

⁷ Ch. iv. 25.

tically, *by the body of Christ*, he reminds us that when Christ, as our Surety, was nailed to the cross, he merited and obtained for all believers, not only remission of their sins, but also the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling virtue sin is daily mortified within them, until it is quite abolished at their natural death. To speak according to the figure which St. Paul here employs; the relation between believers and the law, as a covenant of works, is thus dissolved, so that it no longer exercises over them either a condemning or an enslaving power; they are now *married to Christ, even to him who is raised from the dead*, that so being united to him according to the covenant of grace, and being made partakers of all his unsearchable riches, they may, by the supply of his Spirit, *bring forth fruit unto God*.

Having thus spoken of *bringing forth fruit unto God*, a mode of expression which, when viewed in connexion with the whole scope of the passage before us, unanswerably proves that Christ is God; St. Paul, in the following verses, contrasts the state of persons under the *law* and under *grace*.⁸ *For when we were in the FLESH*; when we followed the natural workings of our own corrupted hearts,⁹ not deriving from the law, considered as a covenant of works, any power to subdue sin; *the motions of sins, which were by the law*, taking occasion by that law which forbade them, but which

⁸ See Chap. vi. 14.⁹ See chap. viii. 1—13.

did not impart any strength in aid of its own prohibitions, *did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. But now*, continues the apostle, exhibiting the other side of the picture, *we are delivered from the law*, from the miserable servitude, the hard exaction, and the woeful curse of the law, when considered as a covenant of works; *that being dead*, or, as it is in the margin,¹ *being dead to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Such, then, is the character of the new relation in which believers are placed under the new covenant, namely, that they *serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* For to all who, according to the apostle's image, are *married* to Christ, there are promises, not only of pardoning mercy, but of sanctifying grace; so that, to adopt the paraphrase of the devout Bishop Hall,² "Believers are encouraged and enabled to lead a new life, with their husband, Christ Jesus, and to serve him in that sanctity and real obedience, which is wrought in them by the gracious influences of the Spirit of renovation, and not in the outward and fashionable knowledge of the law, without any true change of heart." When the apostle says, however, of those who are under the law, as a

¹ This marginal interpretation agrees better with the language of the fourth verse.

² Bishop Hall in loc.

covenant of works, that they *serve God in the oldness of the letter*, it is evident that he here describes the law, not as it is in itself, (for, in the fourteenth verse of this chapter he represents the law as *spiritual*,) but with reference to those sinful beings, to whom its language is addressed. The law says to every child of Adam, "Do this and live;" but since "there is no man that sinneth not,"³ and since the law cannot give any strength for the observance of its commands, it leaves all under condemnation. From this condemnation he only can deliver us, who, while, as our Surety, he has fully endured its sentence, and fulfilled its righteousness, has, at the same time, as our exalted head, received for us those gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, which write the law in our hearts, and so enable us to *serve in newness of spirit*.

Yes, brethren, apart from the Spirit of Christ, the commandments of the law, yea, and the whole word of God, can avail you nothing. And if you would profit, therefore, from hearing and reading that word, you must seek, one and all, to be *married* to Christ; that so, by the daily and hourly communication of his Spirit, you may indeed *bring forth fruit unto God*, and may shew that you have learned to serve him *in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*. Hear him speaking to you in his word, and speak to him again by prayer. Do not be tempted to think that he

³ 1 Kings, viii. 46.

will not regard your prayers, because they are so poor and so imperfect ; but remember how he has graciously declared, that his Holy Spirit *helpeth our infirmities.*"⁴ And when a sense of your unworthiness weigheth down your souls, incline your ear unto those delightful words which the Bridegroom utters, by the mouth of Hosea, saying, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness ; and thou shalt know the Lord."⁵ It is beautifully said of this Bridegroom, in another place, that he stands knocking at the door of our hearts, until "his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night ;"⁶ but, alas ! while we are listening to a thousand deceivers, within us and around us, we cannot hear his voice. May we learn so to "forget"⁷ all the vain enchantments of the world around us, that we may remember him the Lord Jesus Christ, who ought to be the chief object, and the great mover of every heart. And, amidst all the engagements and occupations, amidst all the sorrows and trials of life, may we always hear a voice saying to us, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him !"⁸

⁴ Chap. viii. 26.⁵ Hos. ii. 19, 20.⁶ Sol. Song. v. 2.⁷ Ps xlv. 10.⁸ Matt. xxv. 6.

SECTION XX.

CHAPTER vii. 7—13.

THE LAW IS NOT SIN ; BUT SIN, BY THE COMMANDMENT,
WHICH IS HOLY, JUST, AND GOOD, BECOMES EXCEEDING
SINFUL.

It is the observation of Bishop Reynolds,¹ and surely it is an observation which ought to be well considered by every minister of the gospel, that as, on the one hand, the law may be preached too much, when it is preached without the principal, which is the gospel ; so, on the other hand, the gospel and the mercy therein revealed, may, (if indeed we may call it *preaching*, and not rather *perverting* the gospel,) be preached too much, or rather, indeed, *too little*, because it is with *less success*, when it is preached without its appendage, which is the law.

Yes, my Christian brethren, we should all know our *duty* and our *danger*. Not the best and the holiest among us are arrived at a dispensation above the knowledge and the practice of the moral law. And, assuredly, there is no honour done to the gospel, by explaining it in such a manner as to release us from the duties of this law, seeing that it

¹ Bishop Reynold's works, folio, p. 150.

is one great design of the gospel to restore us to a regular and cheerful obedience to it. To release Christians, indeed, from the precepts of the moral law, what is it but to make “ Christ the minister of sin,”² and “ to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness ? ”³ To pretend that obedience to the moral law is needless for those who have received the gospel, what is it but, as much as in us lies, to deny and to destroy the great end for which Christ came into the world ? “ He came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” “ He came to deliver us from the “ curse of the law,”⁵ that we might love its precepts, and that we might practise them with delight and newness of heart !

It follows, therefore, that it is only when we preach the law *instead* of the gospel, and not when we preach the law to *promote* the gospel, that we justly incur the reproach of substituting a legal for an evangelical sermon. If we look to Christ and his apostles, we find that they preached the law in its commands and in its terrors ; and, as I have already said, it is absolutely necessary that we should learn the law, if we would be acquainted with our duty and with our danger. *By the law is the knowledge of sin ;*⁶ and we may add, that by the law our steps must be directed, as we

² Gal. ii. 17.³ Jude 4.⁴ Tit. ii. 14.⁵ Gal. iii. 13.⁶ Chap. iii. 20.

advance in the paths of holiness. It is in the glass of the law of God, that we see the sinfulness of our hearts and lives : it discovers every blot in our souls, and every blemish in our conversation ; it makes us know our misery ; it humbles us to the dust before God ; and it is employed by the Holy Spirit so to drive us out of ourselves, and all our own pretences to righteousness, that, under an increasing sense of our poverty, and helplessness, and guilt, we may be led to apply the more earnestly for pardoning misery and sanctifying grace. The believer feels and acknowledges, therefore, that it is the office of the law to give him this *knowledge of sin*, and to make him groan under the remainders of corruption in his own heart ; and while he daily feels the remembrance of his sins to be grievous, and the burthen of them to be intolerable ; while he daily experiences that painful conflict between the flesh and the Spirit to which indwelling sin exposes him, he looks forward with increasing desire to that blessed state, where the hearts of the children of God shall be moulded into the very form of this divine law ; where sin shall be banished from all the powers of their souls ; and where pain, and sorrow, and death, and all the bitter fruits of sin shall be done away, and shall be found no more for ever !

This train of thought has been naturally suggested by meditating on that portion of the epistle which forms the subject of the present section, and

in which St. Paul answers the objection which might be raised against his statement respecting *deliverance from the law*.⁷ The first division of the chapter closed with these words, *Now we are DELIVERED FROM THE LAW, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*. But, as some persons may choose to argue, since all deliverance is from sin, and since evil is but two-fold, either *sin* or *death*, must it not follow that the law, from which you speak of our being delivered, must be either *SIN* or *DEATH*? The former objection is made at the seventh, the latter at the thirteenth verse; and each of them may now be considered by us, as they are separately stated and answered by the apostle.

What shall we say then? Is the law SIN? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and

⁷ Ver. 6.

just, and good.^a By thus illustrating and enforcing the importance of Christian holiness, our apostle admirably guards us, in this part of the epistle, against Antinomian errors, as he had, in the preceding part, warned us against pharisaic self-righteousness. The law, as we have seen, cannot *justify* our guilty race; and well, therefore, may we rejoice at being delivered from it as a covenant of works. But it should always be borne in mind, that it is its very perfection which thus leaves sinners under condemnation; and while St. Paul, therefore, shews on the one hand, the impossibility of obtaining salvation by the law, he is careful, on the other hand, to bear his decided testimony to its spirituality and excellency. *The LAW is not SIN*, he says, *for I had not known sin, but by the law.* True, indeed it is, as he goes on to say, that sin *took occasion by the commandment* to shew its malignity; but this was an *occasion*, not naturally offered by the law, but perversely taken by sin, whose property it is to extract poison out of that which is good. Our apostle here represents the law as having been given expressly to prohibit sin; but through his corruption it came to pass, that the law, shewing and prohibiting sin, and yet not giving power to avoid it, *wrought in him all manner of concupiscence*; so that, although he had been *alive without the law once*, and had been proudly regarding himself as in a state of acceptance with

^a Ver. 7—12.

God, yet *when the commandment came* with power to his conscience, declaring its righteous and extensive requirements, *sin revived*; all his corruptions seemed, as it were, to gather head and to rise against the commandment; and *he died*, or became as a dead man, lying under merited condemnation. “And thus,” continues St. Paul, “it came to pass, that *the commandment, which was ordained to life*; ordained to be a *rule of life*, and, if I could have kept it, a *means of life also*; I, through my own corruption, *found to be unto death*. But shall I ascribe that to the *law*, which was entirely owing to my own corruption? No; if the *gospel*, as well when, by man’s perverseness, it is “a savour of death unto death,” as when, by its own gracious efficacy, it is “a savour of life unto life,” is, in each case, “a sweet savour of Christ unto God;”⁹ in like manner, the *law*, whether viewed in itself, or in relation to the bitter fruits which man’s perverseness chooses to extract from it, *is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good*.

But the apostle was aware that when he said, *the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death*, his words might be wrested from their true signification by the perverse disputers of this world. Anxious, therefore, to guard his language against such dangerous misconstruction, he thus meets and answers, in the thirteenth verse, the second objection noticed above: *Was then*

⁹ 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

*that which is good made DEATH unto me? God forbid. But sin was made death unto me, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*¹ Observe with what peculiar emphasis St. Paul *twice* speaks of the law, in this verse, as *that which is good*. How then, as he seems to argue, can that which is *good*, be either *sin* or *death*? No: it is not that which is *good*, but it is *sin*, which was *made death unto me*. It took occasion, from the very goodness of the law, and from my own indwelling corruption, to manifest its malignity and deformity, thus *working death in me by that which is good; that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful*. And who that knows any thing of the workings of his own heart will not acknowledge, with the apostle, how often he has been led thus to feel and deplore *the exceeding sinfulness of sin*? Who that has searched into the “chambers of his imagery,”² to detect all the abominations which lurk within them, will not freely acknowledge that, were it not for the power of divine grace, *sin* would continually take occasion, from the treachery of our own hearts, to *work death in us by that which is good*? *The law, indeed, is holy, and just, and good*; but our fallen nature rebels, brethren, against its solemn requirements; and when we consider, at the same time, its awful denunciations

¹ Ver. 13.² Ezek. viii. 12.

against every kind, and every degree of sin, who is there among us that would not sink into despair, were it not for the promises and the blessings of the gospel covenant ?

Happy, then, thrice happy are they who have thus been led by the law to feel their *need* of that everlasting covenant ! Happy, thrice happy are they who, as they understand more and more of the purity of God's law, and of the deformity of sin, are led nearer and nearer to him who came, not only to " fulfil all righteousness,"³ but also to " enlarge our hearts that we may run the way of his commandments !"⁴ It is, as we have seen, one important use of the moral law, to declare unto us *the exceeding sinfulness of sin*, in order that the abounding grace of God may appear the more conspicuous ; and happy indeed are they who, under a deep and growing conviction of their lost and helpless state, are continually looking unto him who, as the apostle tells us at the close of this chapter, has provided for all who *hate sin*, a glorious and complete deliverance from *the body of this death* !

³ Matt. iii. 15.

⁴ Ps. cxix. 32.

SECTION XXI.

CHAP. vii. ver. 14—25.

THE BELIEVER GRIEVED BECAUSE HE CANNOT KEEP THE LAW.

We now enter upon the third division of the present chapter, in which the apostle describes, from his own experience, the conflict, in the believer's soul, between the *flesh* which resists, and *grace* which consents to, the law of God; concluding with the assurance of the triumph of grace through Jesus Christ.

In this remarkable passage, so strongly does St. Paul set forth his sense of his own sinfulness, that many have supposed him to be speaking of himself while he was persecuting the church; or to be personating an ungodly character; or, at least, to be speaking of a person only beginning to seek God. But it is evident that our venerable translators considered the apostle to be speaking of himself at the very time of his writing the epistle; for, in the title of the chapter, the substance of the whole argument contained in it is thus admirably and emphatically expressed; "No law hath power over a man longer than he liveth: but we are dead to the law. Yet is not the law sin, but holy, just,

and good, *as I acknowledge, who am grieved because I cannot keep it.*"

Such is the language of our translators; and sure I am, brethren, that the more closely we consider this concluding part of the chapter, the more plainly shall we perceive that the apostle is here giving us, in his own case, a particular account of the experienced Christian's conflict with his spiritual foes. It is only the true believer who can say, as St. Paul here says, that he *delights in the law of God after the inward man*; that he *serves it with his mind*; that he *hates all sin*; and that he has a *will* to every part of the spiritual service of God.¹ Nor can we suppose that St. Paul would say so emphatically, in the twenty-fifth verse, *I myself*, had he meant another person of an opposite character; or that he would use the present tense throughout, had he been referring to his past experience in an unconverted state. The whole of the passage most aptly describes the case of a man who loves God and his service, and who desires to obey him, and glorify him as angels do, but who, at the same time, finds the remainder of evil propensities and evil habits continually impeding him, and often appearing to prevail against him. And what, indeed, are all the complaints and all the confessions of believers, in every part of the Scriptures, but declarations of the same spiritual conflict? We read not of any one among them, who

¹ Ver. 22, 25, 15, 18.

explicitly spoke of himself, or who was spoken of by others, as being free from all remains of sin, or as having accomplished his warfare, while he lived in this world. And must we not conclude, therefore, with regard to those persons who profess to have attained to this perfection, either, that they are awfully deceived, or that they use words without attending to their real import? If the inward enemy were indeed slain, and if the believer could, in this sense, adopt the words of Christ, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,"² the rest of his conflict would be comparatively easy; but since this infection of nature still remains, the most advanced Christian must expect, at times, to have his joys interrupted by sighs, and groans, and tears, until he is removed to a better world.

It is manifest, then, that the passage before us silences for ever the arrogant pretensions of the self-righteous Pharisee. It is equally manifest that it utters a voice of solemn warning to those who have been plunging into the depths of the Antinomian heresy. For though it is true that the believer is here described as going on his way "halting,"³ it is only because, like the patriarch of old, he has been continually "wrestling" with his God, in order that he might "prevail" for the blessing, and see the face of Immanuel in peace.⁴

² John xiv. 30. ³ See Gen. xxxii. 31, 24, and 28. ⁴ Scott in loc.

If the believer mourns over his many remaining sins and infirmities, it is because he is daily and hourly contrasting his poor and defiled performances with the strict and unalterable requirements of God's holy law, and because, under an increasing sense of the weakness and treachery of his own deceitful heart, he is daily and hourly "wrestling" for those blessed influences which are given to believers in answer to humble, persevering prayer. But if men shall speak on this subject with indifference or with satisfaction; if *sin dwelling in them* shall be the excuse for crimes committed, without remorse or godly sorrow; if they shall allow the evil, and reject the good, vainly, and may we not add, blasphemously presuming that they have all things in Christ; if, instead of *consenting to the goodness of the law*, condemning themselves, and loathing their sins, they shall depreciate the law, and extenuate their own guilt; if their utmost willingness shall be to escape the condemnation of hell, without longing to be holy, according to the spiritual and good law of God; if, instead of delighting in that law, after the *inward man*, and *serving* it with the prevailing desire of their minds, they shall willingly *serve the law of sin*: it is then but too plain that, be their profession what it may, such persons are strangers to him whose name they profane; that they are under a law which they hate; and that their presumptuous confidence and secu-

rity only prove that they are given over to a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."⁵

It was the apostle's declaration at the thirteenth verse, that *sin wrought death in him by that which was good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*. For, as he now goes on to say, *we know that the LAW is SPIRITUAL*.⁶ It cannot of itself, therefore, be the cause of DEATH. For if the Spirit, as the cause of life, may indeed be described as a quickening Spirit, and if we know that the law is spiritual, we know also that, when considered in itself, it must be suited to free us from death. *But I am carnal*, says the apostle, *sold under sin*; and thus does he enter upon that description of the conflict between the *flesh* and the *spirit*, which forms the subject of the rest of the chapter. In the first part of this epistle, St. Paul has declared the state of all men, Jews and Gentiles, while under the dominion of sin: at the end of the third, and in the two following chapters, he has set forth the state of believers under the grace of *redemption by Christ*: from the commencement of the sixth chapter, he has been declaring their state by the grace of *sanctification*, as being freed, not only from the guilt, but also from the dominion, of sin; and now he sets forth, in his own person, the struggle which is occasioned in the believer's heart by those re-

⁵ 2 Thes. ii. 11.

⁶ Ver. 13.

mainders of corruption, which are still striving to get the mastery over him. *I am carnal*, he says, *sold under sin*. He does not say, as it is said of the wicked king Ahab,⁷ that he has *sold himself*, but that he is *sold*, as an unwilling, reluctant slave, *under sin*! Not *sold*, you observe, TO SIN, so that he should "give himself over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,"⁸ but *sold UNDER sin*,⁹ so as to experience its hateful, though unsuccessful, endeavours to tyrannize over all the powers and faculties of the soul. To borrow the very expressive language of an old expositor,¹ "Christians are like to captives, which, after hard bondage, have some liberty, yet, in sign of captivity, carry an iron chain or a fetter to clog them. For so only are God's best children freed, as that they still bear the clog and chain of corruption about them, for their self-abasement and for their continual exercise."

I have said, brethren, that the apostle speaks, in the passage before us, of a struggle between the *flesh* and the *spirit*, and I now ask you to attend to the striking language in which this conflict is described. *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

⁷ Kings xxi. 20.

⁸ Eph. iv. 19.

⁹ *Non ad peccandum, sed sub peccatum.*

¹ Wilson in loc.

For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh, or in my depraved nature, as derived from fallen Adam,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I pause to remark that, in the last two verses, St. Paul repeats in substance what he had said in the fifteenth and two following verses, speaking here, with additional emphasis, of not doing the *good* that he would, and of doing the *evil* that he would not; and I need scarcely add that this very repetition shews how near the matter lay to his heart, and in what quick and painful succession his complaints were renewed. *I find then a law, he continues,*³ (or, as it might be more emphatically rendered, *THIS LAW,*) *that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*⁴ In these last words, the apostle seems to say; let sinful infirmity keep the saints from pride,

² See Chap. vii. 1—13.³ Ver. 15—25.⁴ τοῦ νόμου.

and let divine grace stay them from despair. They cannot, and ought not to be *proud*, who carry sin in their heart as a *law*; neither need they *faint*, who have grace reigning in their *minds*!

Behold, then, brethren, in the passage now before you, a powerful illustration of the doctrine set forth in the ninth article of our church, which is, not only that "by original, or birth-sin, man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit;" but also, that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated." And as you dwell on the features of the picture which St. Paul exhibits to you, make it your earnest prayer that you may indeed be delivered from THE BODY OF THIS DEATH, or from the deadly mass of corruption which clings so closely to this sinful flesh, that it may be compared to a leprosy, which has taken such deep root in the walls of the house, that it cannot be perfectly cleansed till the house be taken down! ⁵ Consider, also, that if this prayer has not been yours, it is because you have not known any thing of the conflict here described! And consider, further, that if you do not know any thing of this conflict; if you do not find sin continually warring against your graces, it is an argument that you have not yet put on the celestial armour to war against your *sin*! Yes, brethren, if you do not know any thing

⁵ Leighton's works, vol. iii.

of this conflict, it is an argument that you have hitherto remained utterly unmindful of the vows which are upon you, to fight, under Christ's banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your life's end ! " Put on," therefore, " the whole armour of God,"⁶ and remember that it is never to be laid aside, until others shall be called upon to put on your shrouds ! For, to borrow the language of Beveridge,⁷ were sin perfectly subdued under the children of God, and were grace perfectly confirmed in them, what would this be but heaven brought down to earth ? What would this be but the very *crown of the crown of glory* ; the very *heaven of heaven*, which surely no one can expect, as long as he remains a pilgrim here ! So that though grace in this life will take away the *strength*, it cannot take away the *life*, of sin. Though the believer may not live in sin, still sin will live in the believer. His strong sins, indeed, will every day become weaker and weaker, and his weak graces will grow stronger and stronger ; but yet his weak graces will never be perfectly strengthened, nor will his strong sins be ever perfectly subdued, as long as he is in this life. Yea, that " infection of nature which remaineth, even in the regenerate,"⁸ will lead him continually to adopt the language of the apostle, and to say, *O wretched*

⁶ Eph. vi. 11.⁷ Bishop Beveridge on the 39 Articles.⁸ Art. ix.

man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Observe, in conclusion, brethren, how the apostle says, not *who HATH delivered me*, but *who SHALL deliver me, from the body of this death?* Christ, by his precious blood, hath redeemed believers from the *guilt* of sin; but from the *power* of sin they are never perfectly delivered, whilst they are in this world. The grace of sanctification is never so perfect here, but that still every believer has reason to exclaim, with the apostle, *who SHALL deliver me from the body of this death?* And happy is that man who, under an increasing experience of the riches of divine grace, is able to answer, with him, in the language of holy rapture, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

SECTION XXII.

CHAP. viii. ver. 1—13.

NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS,
WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE
SPIRIT. THE CARNAL AND THE SPIRITUAL MIND CON-
TRASTED.

I observed to you, in a late section,¹ that while, in the first five chapters of the epistle, St. Paul guards against that spirit of self-righteousness which cleaves to the law as a covenant of works, he enters, in the sixth and two following chapters, an equally strong and solemn protest against that Antinomian spirit which would reject the law as a rule of life. Two of these chapters have already passed under review, and we enter, in the present section, upon that remarkable chapter, in which, after closing his exhortation to christian obedience, he enlarges, in the most exalted and triumphant language, upon the hopes and the privileges of the children of God, amidst all the trials, and under all the sufferings, of their earthly pilgrimage. It is the chapter of which it has been so beautifully said,² that it begins with *no condemnation*, and that it ends with *no separation*, and that all the intermediate parts are in accordance with these two

¹ Sect. xx.

² Dr. Jacomb.

extremes. In the first thirteen verses, St. Paul enforces the important subject of christian obedience, upon which he has been expatiating in the last two chapters, by contrasting that *carnal mind*, which is *enmity against God*, with that *spiritual mind*, which is *life and peace*; and it is to these verses that I now invite your attention.

The apostle concluded his representation of the conflict, in the believer's soul, between indwelling sin and divine grace, by saying, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the FLESH the law of sin.*³ Following up, according to his usual method, the train of meditation forcibly suggested by the last words, St. Paul thus proceeds: *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, (or, as it is in the margin,⁴ by a sacrifice for sin,) condemned sin in the*

³ Chap. vii. 24, 25.

⁴ This is evidently the force of the expression *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in other passages. See, especially, Heb. x. 6. 8. 18.

flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the first verse, we have, at once, the *foundation* and the *evidence* of our deliverance from condemnation. *There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, abiding in him by a true and lively faith: here is the *foundation*, on which the believer rests the assurance of his deliverance from condemnation. *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*: here is the *evidence* of such deliverance. For, by *walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*, believers shew that they are continually looking to Jesus, earnestly desiring that he, who, by his blood, has freed them from the *guilt*, may, by his Spirit, deliver them, if not altogether from the *assaults*, yet at least from the *dominion*, of sin. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation," says Bishop Hall; "howsoever there may be much trouble and vexation, to them which are in Christ Jesus, being engrafted into him, and made one with him; who, howsoever they may be unable, by reason of the frailty of their nature, always to stand upright, do yet, in respect of the trade and course of their life, walk after the guidance, not of their corrupt nature, but of the Holy Spirit."⁶ The apostle, you observe also, very emphatically describes the *power* of the *Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, as a *LAW*, which rules in the hearts of

⁶ Bishop Hall in loc.

believers, to *make them free from the LAW of sin and death*. And this mention of *Christ Jesus* leads the apostle on to speak of that mysterious sacrifice, whereby God did *that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh*. God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, or, by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; condemned that which before condemned us, henceforward enabling all true believers to say, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.*⁷ Amazing mystery! that sin should be condemned in that flesh, which, though free from the contagion of sin, was yet in the *likeness of sinful flesh*, because it was not free from those infirmities of hunger, thirst, weariness, and death, which are the bitter fruits of sin; that so, through the virtue of that sacrifice, believers should be for ever free from sin's condemning power! As believers contemplate this sacrifice of the Son of God, and learn how God can do that which the *law could not do*, viz. *condemn sin*, and yet *spare the person of the sinner*; must they not earnestly desire that their old nature may be crucified with Christ, and that, through the aid of the *Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, and through his commanding influence in the soul, *the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?*

⁷ Ver. 34.

And now it is that, having thus again described believers, as *walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*, St. Paul illustrates the state of those who *walk after the Spirit*, by contrasting it with the state of those who *walk after the flesh*. For *they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*. For to be carnally minded⁸ is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.⁹ As I observed in the last section, it is evident that, by the term *flesh*, we are to understand the state of man by nature, such as he is when left to himself, contrasted with that spiritual state of mind which is wrought in the believer, through the influence of the Holy Spirit. And the real character of that *enmity against God*, in which the *carnal mind* is said to consist, is illustrated in the latter clause of the seventh verse, where the apostle says, *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. Hence we learn, (and this is a remark which deserves to be considered by those who are apt to revolt at the charge of *enmity against God*,) that the enmity here spoken of is not to be regarded as

⁸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός. Margin: the minding of the flesh. See Article ix.

⁹ Ver. 5—8.

a direct enmity against the Most High,¹ but rather as a dislike of the government which he exercises, and of the laws which he ordains; those laws, more particularly, which concern ourselves, restraining us from any course of conduct which we wish to pursue, or requiring of us what we feel no disposition to perform. These are the objects of dislike to the *carnal mind*; and *enmity* against them may be properly said to be *enmity against God*, seeing that it resists his authority, power, and dominion in the world. Of this *enmity of the carnal mind*, our apostle truly affirms, and our church repeats the declaration, in her ninth Article, that IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD. It prefers self-indulgence, the universal idolatry of our corrupted nature, to the favour and service of God; and it must cease to be itself, before it can be *subject to the law of God*, since its very essence consists in not acknowledging the divine will. An enemy, indeed, may be reconciled; a carnal man may become spiritual; but *enmity*, in the abstract, cannot be reconciled;² and it follows, therefore, that *they that are in the flesh* CANNOT PLEASE GOD.

But, as the apostle goes on to say to the believing Romans, *ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*³ In speaking of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul, you observe, describes him, in the first

¹ See Venn's Sermons, vol. iii.

² Scott in loc.

³ Ver. 9—11.

clause of this verse, as the *Spirit of God*; and, in the second, as the *Spirit of Christ*; thus plainly teaching us that he is the Spirit of Christ, as Christ is God. And how important is the declaration contained in the latter clause, viz. *if any man HAVE NOT the Spirit of Christ, he is NONE OF HIS!* It is only by his Spirit, that we can be made his, and become very members incorporate in that mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people! *And if Christ be in you*, thus St. Paul proceeds, (and these words, when compared with the language immediately preceding, clearly shew that we are to regard Christ and the Holy Spirit as the SAME GOD,) *the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* The apostle had spoken, in the ninth verse, of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And now, in order to enforce still more strongly the important truth, that the three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity co-operate in the economy of man's redemption, he again makes express mention of them all in these two verses, reminding believers, in the tenth verse, that *CHRIST is in them*, and, in the eleventh, not only that the *SPIRIT of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in them*, but also that *HE*

who raised up Christ from the dead, will quicken their mortal bodies by the same Spirit.

Ponder in your hearts, I beseech you, the declaration of the apostle, that *if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* It is as if he had said ; though the body is about to die, or, as it is here strongly expressed, DEAD, because already condemned to the grave, yet the *Spirit is LIFE* ; the spiritual part of the true believer has already commenced that *life*, which, through the righteousness of Christ, shall endure for ever. For, as St. Paul argues, *if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you :* in other words ; the Holy Spirit will not finally leave his temple to moulder in the dust, but will, at the last day, *quicken those mortal bodies* in which he *now dwelleth*, as at once the fountain of all holiness, and the earnest of our everlasting inheritance. It is also worthy of remark, that in the ninth verse, St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as DWELLING *in believers* ; that, in the tenth verse, he represents Christ *as being in them* ; and that again, in the eleventh verse, he twice repeats the expression of the *Spirit that DWELLETH in believers.* May not this be intended as a word of special encouragement and comfort to

believers, after what the apostle had said, in the preceding chapter, respecting INDWELLING SIN? And should not all this remind us how necessary it is to pray that the *sin*, which *dwelleth in us*, may become daily weaker and weaker; and that the *grace*, which *dwelleth in us*, may daily become stronger and stronger?

But not content with leaving this to be inferred by us, the apostle adds, in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*⁴ Mark the force of this expression, *If ye THROUGH THE SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body.* The Holy Spirit is here plainly represented, not as a forcing, but as an assisting power; not as suspending, but as strengthening our faculties. It is the Holy Spirit, indeed, who works in us both to will and to do; but, at the same time, it rests with ourselves whether we will avail ourselves of his blessed influences. We must, ourselves, do what God commands, though we must do it *through the Holy Spirit*, and in dependence upon his never-failing strength. St. Paul's words are, *If YE through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* There is also a peculiar energy in the very form of the original word, which is here

⁴ Ver. 12, 13.

rendered *ye shall live*.⁵ it is not merely, *ye shall attain unto life*; but, *ye shall* CONTINUE TO LIVE. Ye shall complete, in the kingdom of glory, the life which ye have now commenced in the kingdom of grace. Ye shall experience, in all its blessedness, the fulness of that life and peace, which is even now enjoyed, in a measure, by all who love God. Yes, brethren, I repeat, *by all who* LOVE GOD: and if any shall ask why believers may be thus described as those who *love God*, I would remind them how it was once said, in answer to one who asked, why are the beautiful loved? “*It is a blind man’s question.*” Certainly we are *blind*, says Leighton,⁶ if we see not cause enough, not only to desist from enmity, but to be inflamed with the love of God. One glance of his countenance is enough to cause the most rebellious heart to lay down arms, and for ever to devote itself to his service. Alas! we know him not, and therefore it is that we hold out against him. For is he not the living spring of all our comforts? Have we not from him life, and breath, and all things richly to enjoy? And must we not be persuaded, therefore, that *if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body*, WE SHALL LIVE?

⁵ *ζησεσθε*, not, according to the construction of the first clause, *μελλετε ζην*. Bengel in loc.

⁶ Leighton’s works, vol. iii.

SECTION XXIII.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 14—17.

WHAT IT IS TO BE GOD'S CHILDREN.

At the thirteenth verse, St. Paul dismisses the subject of the *carnal mind*, that he may enlarge, in the remainder of the chapter, upon the prevailing character, and the glorious privileges of the true believer. He had said, in the latter clause of that verse, *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, or, shall continue to live*; completing, in the kingdom of glory, the life which has been commenced in the kingdom of grace. And in the four following verses, to which I am now to invite your attention, St. Paul goes on to *prove* the declaration contained in the above clause, by shewing that all who through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, are THE CHILDREN OF GOD. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs;*

*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*¹

In this short, but highly animated and striking passage, the apostle gives us three characteristics of the children of God ; first, that they are *led by the Spirit* ; secondly, that they call upon God as upon a *Father* ; and, thirdly, that the *Spirit beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God*.

1. St. Paul says, in the first place, of all the children of God, that they are *led by the Spirit*. I took occasion, in the preceding section, to observe to you how the Scriptures invariably represent the Holy Spirit as an assisting, not a forcing power ; as not suspending our own faculties, but strengthening and improving them. And I may now go on to remark, that the same important truth is plainly inculcated in this expression of being *led by the Spirit*. “ He leadeth the willing ; he haleth not the unwilling.”² Yes, brethren, the Holy Spirit moves and inclines only, but does not compel. He leads and conducts, as many as will be led and conducted by him ; but he does not so forcibly attract them as to overrule all stubborn resistance or reluctant perverseness. God has not seen fit to provide a remedy for malicious wickedness, or proud obstinacy ; but, in such cases, the Holy Spirit, “ grieved,” and “ resisted,”³ leaves the in-

¹ Ver. 14—17. ² T. Wilson in loc. ³ Acts vii. 51. Eph. iv. 30.

corrigible to themselves, and to their own certain destruction ; plainly teaching us that if we will not be *led* by the Spirit, we shall not be *driven*. But if this is really one of the marks of the children of God, that they are *led by the Spirit*, are we careful, brethren, to examine ourselves in this matter ? Is it our daily prayer that, in the discharge of the several duties and relations of life, and in the employment of our time, our opportunities, our influence, and all our other talents, we may be *led by the Spirit of God* ? For to adopt, with some little alteration, the language employed by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews,⁴ if we have “ fathers of our flesh,” who lead us, and advise us, and we “ give them reverence ;” shall we not “ much rather” follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, “ and live ?”

2. To proceed to the second characteristic of the children of God, viz. that they call upon God as upon a *Father*. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*. In these words, St. Paul places before us the manner in which the work of divine grace is begun and carried on in the hearts of men. We have seen, in former parts of the epistle,⁵ how emphatically it may be said, of every true penitent, that *the law enters, that the offence may abound*. The awak-

⁴ See Heb. xii. 9.

⁵ Chap. v. 20, and chap. vii. 8—13.

ened sinner sees, and feels, and deplores, the misery of his natural state; and these solemn convictions may be regarded as the method by which the Holy Spirit, moving upon his mind, prepares him for receiving Christ by faith. But still, of all who are only in this preparatory state; of all who have been thus brought to feel and acknowledge *the exceeding sinfulness of sin*,⁶ without having as yet experienced the *fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ*;⁷ it may indeed be said that they have *received the spirit of BONDAGE*. To this the apostle here beautifully opposes *the Spirit of ADOPTION*. He deems it not enough to say, the Spirit of *liberty*, (which might more naturally have suggested itself, as being, in strictness, the opposite term to *bondage*,) but he says, more emphatically, the *Spirit of adoption*. Servants may be made *free*, and often were so among the Romans, without being received as *sons*: but Christians, as we are here taught, are much more than bare freemen; they are *sons*, and therefore they have a filial spirit, such as sons have; a spirit, which sways them not by *fear*, but by *love to God as their Father*, so that they cry, *Abba, Father*. We learn, from the gospel of St. Mark,⁸ that our blessed Lord used the very same form of invocation in his agony in the garden; and, in thus adopting his language, the apostle seems emphati-

⁶ Chap. vii. 13.⁷ Chap. xv. 29.⁸ Mark xiv. 36.

cally to remind us that it is the " Spirit of his SON,"⁹ which God sends into the hearts of his children. I would observe, also, that by the word which is rendered *cry*,¹ St. Paul powerfully describes those deep emotions which are wrought by the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart, and which sometimes can only find utterance in the repeated and piercing exclamation of *Abba, Father!*² To complete the pathos of this verse, St. Paul, by a sudden change of person, (saying, *YE have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby WE cry, Abba, Father,*) inculcates upon Christians, that each should look upon all around him, as having been invited to share with himself, in the SAME *Spirit of adoption*, and to become, together with himself, very members incorporate in that mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people!

3. We are now arrived at the third characteristic of the children of God; viz. that the *Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. Here, again, the Holy Spirit is plainly represented to be not a forcing, but only an assisting power. *The Spirit itself beareth witness WITH our spirit*. Now it is quite evident³ that there is nothing whatever in these words, to encourage the notion that the

⁹ Gal. iv. 6.¹ κραζωμεν. See Schleusner.

See also Jer. iii. 19.

³ Bishop Ball's Sermons.

Holy Spirit speaks to believers by an immediate oracle, voice, or whisper within them, pronouncing, in express words, their pardon and acceptance with God, or saying that they are the sons of God. This is, indeed, a vain imagination, and as dangerous as it is vain ; it being apt to lead some into despair, as not finding any such whisper within them, and to expose others to presumption and the delusion of the evil spirit. Such a vocal testimony as this, which is no where promised in the Scriptures, would have been described as the immediate testimony of the Spirit *alone* ; whereas St. Paul speaks of a testimony of the Spirit, *concurring* with the testimony of *our spirit*. And if you ask, brethren, how it is that he thus *witnesses with our spirit*, I would answer, in the language of our church, that it is by that *preventing* and *assisting* grace for which we are taught to pray, beseeching God that “ as, by his special grace preventing us, he puts into our minds good desires, so by his continual help we may bring the same to good effect.”⁸ The Holy Spirit, it is evident, has the chief part in this most blessed work ; for it is he who produces those graces in us, which are the evidence of our adoption, and it is he who strengthens the testimony of those heavenly graces, by causing them to grow and flourish in our hearts. But it is equally evident, that our spirits have their share in this solemn testimony. We must have the evi-

⁸ Collect for Easter day.

dence of our own spirits that we *cherish* all those “good desires” which the Holy Spirit “puts into our minds,” and that, with his assistance, we are continually *endeavouring* to “bring the same to good effect.” In other words, we must have both *inward* and *outward* signs of grace. The inward sign is a heart disposed in all things to obey God’s blessed will. The outward signs are acts of cheerful obedience conformable to that disposition. Both these signs must invariably concur. For if we inwardly approve the divine commands, but do not obey them, must it not follow, that we are yet in our sins? And if, on the other hand, we outwardly conform to the law, while in our hearts we hate it, is it not evident that our outward compliance is only fleshly wisdom, and not the work of the Spirit? But when we have the evidence of our own spirits that we do indeed love the law of God; and when we have the evidence of the Holy Spirit, working in us by obedience; when we both *love* and *obey* the commands of God, and feel our hearts continually drawn towards him as to a loving father, we cannot want any thing further to assure us that we are indeed the *children of God*.

But, says the apostle, *if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. How emphatically do these words, *if children, then HEIRS*, describe the privileges of the children of God, and the plentiful provision which our heavenly Father

has laid up in store for them ! In this heavenly inheritance we do not read of any distinction, as in earthly inheritances, between the elder and the younger branches of the family ; but all true believers are described as so many *first born*, for whom abundant provision has been made. The narrowness of our possessions upon earth requires exact distinctions and careful limitations. But it is the pre-eminence of our heavenly inheritance, that there will be enough and more than enough, for every partaker of it. No child of God shall feel himself straitened there by another's abundance ; but the joy of every other glorified spirit shall be an addition to his own !

St. Paul says, lastly, of all true believers, that they are *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. They are not only HEIRS of him who reigns above, that so they may learn to despise the lying vanities of the world around them ; but they are also JOINT-HEIRS with him, who once died on the cross ; and are always prepared to be crucified with him, *that they may be also glorified together* ! It was the prospect of this glory, brethren, which animated the noble army of martyrs. They were well content to share here in the sufferings of Christ, that so they might be *joint-heirs* with him hereafter, in the kingdom of glory ; and, therefore, “ when they were carried to the stake, to drink of the cup of fire, they cheered upon it with this meditation, that though

their breakfast were sour, their supper would be full sweet." Such was the triumphant persuasion of the martyrs of old; and should it not be the prayer of the *children of God*, in every age, that they may have such a *breakfast*, rather than be deprived of such a *supper*? Should not all believers fervently pray for grace so to *suffer here with Christ, that they may be also glorified together*?

SECTION XXIV.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 18—23.

THE WHOLE CREATION WAITING FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD.

The animated passage, which formed the subject of the last section, closed with a note of suffering. The *children of God* were there represented as *joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that they suffer with him, that they may be also glorified together*. And having thus taught all afflicted believers to contemplate the happiness and glory of a *joint inheritance* with the ever-blessed

⁵ Thomas Wilson in loc.

Son of God, St. Paul enlarges, through the remainder of the chapter, on the subject of Christian suffering.

All who are experimentally acquainted with the trials of the Christian life, will regard the apostle's argument, in the two preceding chapters on the subject of Christian obedience, as an admirable preparation for that part of the eighth chapter which remains to be considered ; and it will, I am persuaded, tend very powerfully to illustrate the real scope and signification of this most affecting portion of Scripture, if we bear in mind that it evidently applies to those, and those only, who, as *children of God*, are, at all times and under all circumstances, disposed and enabled to *do* or to *suffer* God's blessed will. A child of God will always be assured, brethren, that his heavenly Father intends his benefit in the use of his chastening rod. And it is this sweet persuasion which proves that he has indeed received that Spirit of adoption *whereby we cry, Abba, Father*. For to believe that when God afflicts us, he does nothing unsuitable to the character of a loving father, and that he always wisely and graciously designs therein the good of our souls ; this is, and must be, the unalterable conviction of every child of God. To suppress every murmuring word and thought ; cheerfully to submit, in all things, to the divine wisdom and will ; to put a good construction upon the darkest providences ; still to love, and still to

trust in a correcting God, and to wait with submission his time and way for deliverance; this is indeed to act and to suffer like a child of God! Dwelling on the prospect of that complete deliverance which awaits God's children, St. Paul proceeds to speak of the *glory* which is to be *revealed* in them; and he represents the whole creation as earnestly waiting for this *manifestation of the sons of God*. He had spoken, in the last clause of the seventeenth verse, of our *suffering with Christ*, that we may be also *glorified together*. And now, therefore, following up these two last-mentioned subjects of *suffering* and *glory*, he goes on to say; *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*¹ Such was the firm persuasion of the apostle; and if *we* would be as firmly persuaded as *he* was of this solemn truth, we must, after his example, habitually contrast the world, which is a scene of sorrow and sin, with him who is the satisfying portion of the believer's soul, and the crown of all his joys; and we must habitually contrast "our light affliction, which is but for a moment,"² with that recompence, which awaits the Christian pilgrim in the fruition of the glorious Godhead! God lives and reigns even now in the hearts of his children; but his *glory* is not yet *revealed in them*. It is only in heaven that the veil will be for ever removed; and

¹ Ver. 18.² 2 Cor. iv. 17.

that the glory of his dominion will be fully manifested in his redeemed people !

It is of this manifestation of the divine glory, that our apostle speaks, with such solemn emphasis, in the five following verses ; *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth, he says, for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope ; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*³

The above passage has been the subject of interpretations far too numerous to be noticed within the limits of the present section. But, after every fresh perusal, I rise from its contemplation with a fresh conviction that St. Paul here

Bids us see in heaven and earth,
In all fair things around,
Strong yearnings for a blest new birth,
With sinless glories crown'd !⁴

³ Ver. 19—23.

Keble's " Christian Year." Hymn on the fourth Sunday after Trinity.

The apostle had just been saying, in the person of every true believer, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Viewing the nineteenth and twenty-second verses, therefore, in immediate connexion with the above words, we may suppose the children of God to say; “With such a prospect before us, well may we resolve to endure whatever afflictions we may meet with here. Neither are we *alone*, moreover, in these sufferings, or in this patient hope; for the whole creation *suffers with us*, and does, with an *earnest expectation*, wait and long; yea, it seems to *wrestle with labour-pangs* for that day, wherein there shall be a full accomplishment of the glory of the sons of God; that then it may be delivered from the bondage of corruption!”^b In the interpretation of such a passage as this, there is place for what Tertullian calls a “learned ignorance;” but it is evident, on the one hand, that St. Paul here represents sin as being such an intolerable burthen, that it makes the very frame of heaven and earth, yea, and the whole creation, to crack and groan under its pressure; and it is equally evident, on the other hand, that, he applies this mysterious truth to the comfort of the afflicted believer, by leading him to regard this *earnest expectation of the creature*, as establishing the *certainty* of heavenly glory!

^b Bishop Hall in loc.

Now do you ask, brethren, why it is that the *whole creation thus* GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN? And do you ask, whence is *this* EARNEST EXPECTATION of the creature? The apostle answers, *Because the creature was made* SUBJECT TO VANITY. And does not every thing around you, and every thing above you, bear testimony to the truth of this representation? Every thing seems perverted from its intended use. If you look above you, even the heavenly luminaries have been perverted to idolatry, which is emphatically *vanity*; and if you look around you, sin has filled the earth with suffering, yea, with unspeakable disorder and misery. So that all things appear to groan under *bondage* to human depravity; and the good creatures of God appear to be evil, through man's abuse of them.⁶

I say, *appear* to be evil; for mark how the apostle says; that the *creature was made subject to vanity, not* WILLINGLY, but by a kind of constraint, through the guilt and condemnation of Adam and his posterity. It was not, then, of their *own accord*, but through our sinfulness, that the *creatures became subject to vanity*, and capable either of *doing* or of *suffering* ill. For, as St. Peter asks, who, or what could have "harmed us," if we had been "followers of that which is good?"⁷ It is quite certain that the creatures of God would have been still harmless, if we had been still faultless. And

⁶ Scott in loc.

⁷ 1 Pet. iii. 13.

if, therefore, we see any evil in them, or experience any evil from them, let us not lay the blame, or wreak our hatred, upon *them*; but let us rather bestow our blame and our hatred where it is most due; the blame upon *ourselves*, the hatred upon our *sins*. “When we suffer,” say Bishop Sanderson, “we curse, or, at the least, we blame the creatures; when, alas! these have neither heart nor strength against us, but what we ourselves put into them by our sins.”⁸ Does it not follow, therefore, (and I pray, brethren, that this conclusion may sink into our hearts!) that every sense of evil *in* or *from* the creatures, should work in us a sense of our own disobedience to God? Does it not follow that it should increase in us a detestation of the sins which we have committed against God; and that it should teach us, by condemning ourselves, to acquit the good creatures of God? For as all the “creatures of God” are “good”⁹ in *themselves*, so would they have been always and altogether “good” unto *us*, if we had only been true to ourselves, and had continued good and faithful servants unto God.

Man only mars the sweet accord,
O'erpowering with harsh din
The music of God's works and word,
Ill matched with grief and sin!¹

⁸ Bishop Sanderson's works. Sermon on 1 Tim. iv. 4.

⁹ 1 Tim. iv. 4.

¹ Keble ut supra. The hymn is entitled “The Groans of Na-

It is under a continual sense of this state of *vanity* and disorder, that the whole creation is here represented as *groaning and travailing in pain*, until it shall be DELIVERED *from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*. This language seems to convey the mysterious truth, that the restitution of the creature shall be like the resurrection of the dead. And here, as I have said, there is place for a *learned ignorance*. But mysterious as this language is, it seems to contain, brethren, a word of admonition for all. It says, on the one hand, to the children of the world; You mind earthly things; your portion and your treasure is here: and therefore it is that, through the love of the world, and the strength of indwelling corruption, you have quenched altogether that desire of heavenly glory, which still lives in the rest of the creation! And it says, on the other hand, to the children of light; You who, as the children of God,

ture;" and there is, I think, a peculiar beauty in the two following stanzas;

Why mourn'st thou still as one bereft,
Now that th' eternal Son
His blessed home in heaven hath left,
To make thee all his own?

Thou mourn'st because sin lingers still
In Christ's new heaven and earth;
Because our rebel works and will
Stain our immortal birth!

have been “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance;”² do you not feel that the *earnest expectation of the creature* reproves the comparative weakness and coldness of your desires after heavenly glory? Does not that heavenly glory in a more especial manner and measure belong to you? And should you not be daily and hourly endeavouring, therefore, to *mortify, through the Spirit, the deeds of the body,*³ and to crucify the world unto yourselves, under the full conviction that heaven is more or less desired, just in proportion as our affections are more or less engrossed by the things of earth?

Let us observe, in conclusion, how it is said in the twenty-third verse, of all who are indeed the *children of God*, and who, as such, have the *first fruits of the Spirit*, as the earnest of their heavenly inheritance,⁴ that *they themselves groan within themselves*, waiting for that great day which may, with the fullest emphasis, be termed the day of their *adoption*; seeing that, on that day, they shall be publicly declared, before men and angels, to be the *sons of God*! They remember how expressly it is said by our Lord, that the “children of God,”⁵ are the “children of the resurrection;” and they *groan*, therefore, *within themselves, waiting for the day of the redemption of the body*, as the day

² Eph. i. 13, 14.³ Ver. 13.⁴ See 2 Cor. i. 22; and Eph. i. 13, 14.⁵ Luke xx. 36.

of their public, solemn *adoption*, and as the perfection of their state.

Now is it thus that we, the professed *children of God*, are daily shewing that we have *received the spirit of adoption*? If we are *the children of God*, not only in name and in profession, but in deed and in truth, we shall be continually *groaning within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*. And in the meantime, while, as the *children of God*, we have the *first fruits of the Spirit*, we shall regard these graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit, as a blessed token and pledge of the love of our heavenly Father, to assure us that, amidst all the trials and changes of life, he will “strengthen us, with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness!”⁶

SECTION XXV.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 24—27.

WHAT IT IS TO BE SAVED BY HOPE, AND TO BE HELPED IN
OUR INFIRMITIES BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We are now occupied with that part of the eighth chapter, which treats of the topic of Christian suf-

⁶ Col. i. 11.

fering; and, in the last section, I took occasion to point out to you how St. Paul places before us the consolations which the children of God derive from habitually looking forward to *the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*. To shew the certainty of this heavenly glory, our apostle, as you have seen, represents the whole creation as *earnestly expecting this manifestation of the sons of God*. For though the creature has been made *subject to vanity*, yet the apostle expressly tells us, that God hath *subjected the same IN HOPE*. And if this may be said respecting the rest of God's creation, with how much greater emphasis may it be applied to those who have *received that spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and to whom, therefore, that heavenly glory belongs in a more especial manner and measure! If it is *hope*, which leads the creation at large, while *groaning and travailing in pain*, still to *wait for the manifestation of the sons of God*; must it not follow, that it is *hope* also, which leads these who have *the first fruits of the Spirit*, while *they themselves groan within themselves*, still to *wait for that day of the redemption of the body*, which is to be the day of their public and solemn *adoption* as the children of God? Yes, brethren, hope is the "*anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast*,"¹ on which the believer rests, amidst all the storms and the billows of this sinful world! While faith en-

¹ Heb. vi. 19.

ables the child of God to receive the promises of salvation, hope enables him to look forward unto the end, to the full perfection of bliss. If faith is the instrument, without which the sinner cannot lay hold of Christ, hope is the sure sign of his being in a justified and reconciled state. If faith is the guide which conducts the penitent into the paths of peace, it is hope which continually strengthens his persuasion of the Saviour's love, and which teaches him to look for the fulness and perfection of salvation in heaven, because God hath plainly promised, and because faith hath surely believed that promise. And, accordingly, when we bring our children to the baptismal font, we are taught to pray, in their behalf, that they, being “stedfast in *faith*, joyful through *hope*, and rooted in *charity*, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life!”²

By thus placing *hope* at the very threshold of the Christian temple, as the companion of *faith* and *love*, the fathers of our church would seem to remind us that while it is by *faith* that the child of God has *access into the grace wherein he stands*, it is *hope* which enables him, under all the trials of life, *to glory in tribulations*,³ looking continually to that fulness of salvation in heaven, when, faith being swallowed up in certainty, and hope in frui-

² Office for public baptism of infants.

³ Chap. v. 2, 3.

tion, *love* shall remain as his “never failing”⁴ portion through the ages of eternity! And it is this same truth which, in the former part of the passage before us, our apostle inculcates, beginning with these very emphatic words, *For we are saved by hope*:⁵ that is to say; how much soever we are, for the present, afflicted or distressed, so that we may be said to *groan within ourselves*,⁶ under the pressure of the burthen which is laid upon us, yet *waiting as we are for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*, we feel that in *assured hope we are saved*, having, so to speak, already *laid hold of this complete salvation by the power of our hope*.⁷ But, as the apostle goes on to say, *hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*.⁸ What an argument is this, brethren, against placing our happiness in any of the things around us! For if, in the sense above explained, we are saved by *hope*, and if *hope that is SEEN is not hope*, must it not follow, that the *hope*, of which the apostle speaks, and which, as he here declares, is inseparably connected with salvation, has not any relation whatever to the visible things around us? And is it not certain, therefore, that they only can know any thing whatever of the Christian’s hope who, instead of placing their happiness in worldly

⁴ See 1 Cor. xiii. 8.⁵ Ver. 24.⁶ Ver. 28⁷ Hall in loc.⁸ Ver. 24, 25.

things, are looking continually to the things which are *not seen*, and are thus learning to regard the *sufferings of this present time, as not WORTHY TO BE COMPARED with the glory which shall be revealed in us?*⁹ Such was the apostle's firm persuasion, and such, it is evident, must be the persuasion of all who lean upon the anchor of hope; for, as he argues, *if we HOPE for that we see not, then do we with PATIENCE wait for it.*

When our apostle was speaking, at the beginning of the fifth chapter, of the fruits of reconciliation with Christ, he represented the believer *as glorying in tribulations*,¹ knowing that *tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.*" By now reversing the order, and speaking of *patience* as following after *hope*, he would seem to remind us of this important truth, viz. that all the Christian graces move, as it were, in a perpetual circle, each of them, by a blessed action, and reaction, mutually producing and strengthening the other. And if it be indeed true, brethren, that the growth of Christian *hope* is always accompanied by the growth of Christian *patience*, (that divine grace which enables the child of God to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,"²) may I not pause for a while, and ask you to consider, more particularly, the nature and the character of Christian hope? It arises from a firm belief of the life to come, and

⁹ Ver. 18.¹ See chap. v. 1—5.² See Rev. xiv. 4.

of the inheritance prepared for all the children of God. And it is strengthened and improved, by continual meditation upon that heavenly inheritance. When faith has once enabled us to lay hold of the promises of salvation, hope follows in her train, to whisper to us, continually, respecting the blessed regions above. Hope represents to us, in a lively manner, the glory of the heavenly mansions. We contemplate the order, the harmony, and the happiness of the blessed "spirits of just men made perfect,"² the presence of the great Mediator; and the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the glorious Godhead uniting to form an assemblage of all that will tend to perfect the happiness of the redeemed. The prospect which hope gives, realizes heaven to our view, and, in comparison of it, this earth appears as nothing. All its honours fade, all its pleasures wither, all its pomp disappears, all its sufferings seem to be but for a moment, and the soul is swallowed up in the contemplation of that "eternal weight of glory"³ which is set before us. When heaven is called by way of eminence the *glory of God*,⁴ it implies that the glory which shines through the whole universe, is there collected, as the light is in the sun. And the Christian *hope* of this glory implies, that the soul is often transported into those happy regions, and that, there walking with God, it imbibes somewhat of the spirit and temper of that blessed place,

² Heb. xii. 23.³ 2 Cor. iv. 17.⁴ Chap. v. 2

one glimpse of which can afford more real delight to the soul, than all the pleasures put together which are to be found in this vain and transitory life. Now if our hope shall give us this bright and clear view of the life to come, so that it shall be in a manner present with us, then shall we know what it is to *wait* WITH PATIENCE *for the glorious manifestation of the sons of God!*⁶

Having thus shown that *hope*, the inseparable companion of a true and lively faith, is strengthened and improved by a frequent and delightful meditation on the happiness of heaven; I would now add, that its growth will always be manifested by a confident expectation of the full and blessed *enjoyment* of this *glory of God*. It is certain, brethren, that the clear view of the glory of heaven of which I have been speaking, would tend only to depress the spirits of men, if they could not entertain a hope that they might find admittance there. But it is one of the privileges of the Gospel, that they who truly receive it, may attain the fullest assurance of *hope*, that, through the infinite mercies of the Saviour, they shall enter into glory! For they “know whom they have believed,”⁷ and they are persuaded that he is equally able and willing to pardon their sins, and to admit them to his kingdom above.

But while I thus speak to you of the rich and full provision which has been made in the Gospel for

⁶ See ver. 19.

⁷ 2 Tim. i. 12.

the growth and the encouragement of Christian hope, I must remind you, that all who value this hope of glory, will make it their daily prayer that they may "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called."⁸ "He that hath this hope," says St. John, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure."⁹ This is the scriptural guard, brethren, against a presumptuous abuse of this doctrine; and you may rest assured, that there will always be a beautiful correspondence and harmony in every part of the conduct of those whose heart is right with God. You may rest assured, that the hope of heaven will always be closely and inseparably connected with that purity of mind, and that love to God, which will preserve the soul from sin.

It is to inculcate the above truth, that St. Peter joins the duty of "hoping to the end," with that of "girding up the loins of the mind."¹ Alluding, in these words, to the custom of Eastern countries, where travellers gird up their long loose garments, in order that they may proceed on their journey without incumbrance, St. Peter seems to say, "Gather up your affections, that they hang not down to hinder you in your course. And not only gather them up, but gird them, so that they may not again fall loose." And even so, my Christian brethren, ought we to be like men prepared

⁸ Eph. iv. 1.⁹ 1 John iii. 3.¹ 1 Pet. i. 13; and Archbishop Leighton in loc.

for a journey tending to another place. Always remembering that this is not the home or the place of our rest, we should keep our loins girt up; we should take care that our affections do not train and drag down upon the earth; and we should learn, moreover, to thank God for all the trials through which we may have to pass, as the most signal instances of his providential care. For it is chiefly in the fair and calm weather of prosperity, says Leighton, that Christians suffer their affections to fall so low, that they abate somewhat of their heavenly hopes; and therefore it is that God doth often wisely and mercifully cause rough blasts of affliction to arise upon them, to make them gather up their loose garments more carefully, and gird them more closely round their loins.

In the world through which we are walking, brethren, there is, indeed, much mire of pollution, with which our garments, if not thus girt up, would assuredly be defiled. We are here walking, moreover, amidst briars and thorns, which, if we suffer our garments to fall loose, will entangle and hinder us, and possibly tear our garments. Must it not follow, therefore, that our only safe course is always to gird “up the loins of our minds,” and so to “hope to the end,” until, through God’s mercy, we reach that place of rest, where the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem walk with their long white flowing robes, without any fear of in-

jury or pollution, because, "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth,"² and because its streets are paved with pure gold?

In the two remaining verses of the passage before us, St. Paul speaks of the aid of the Holy Spirit, as being promised to those who, in *hope* and in *patience*, are *waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body*. While the children of God are thus waiting, amidst manifold trials and temptations, for *what they see not*, their infirmities are so many and so great, that they would soon be overpowered if left to themselves; but, as our apostle goes on to say, in the person of all true believers, *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; because³ he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*⁴

Observe the emphasis of the apostle's language; *LIKEWISE the Spirit ALSO*. It is as if he had said to the children of God; I have spoken to you of the many inducements which you have in the Gospel for bearing the cross patiently. I have told you that *if we suffer here with Christ, we shall be also glorified together.*⁵ I have told you

² Rev. xxi. 27.

⁴ Ver. 26, 27.

³ Græc. Marg. *that*.

⁵ Ver. 17.

that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*⁶ I have reminded you that you are not *alone* in this suffering state, but that the whole creation suffers with you, and is with an *earnest expectation, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.*⁷ I have told you, also, that you have the promise of *hope*, to enable you to look forward to the fulness of salvation in heaven, and the promise of *patience*, that you may quietly wait for its accomplishment; and, if all this is not enough to encourage you, let me now add, that *likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.* The apostle spoke at the fifteenth verse, of our having *received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and we may conclude, therefore, that by the expression which he here employs, of the Spirit *making intercession* for the children of God, *with groanings which cannot be uttered*, we are to understand him as declaring to us, according to the idiom of scripture, (which often attributes exclusively unto God himself, those things which his people do by his assistance,) that the Holy Spirit stirs up requests in us, and enables us to pray. And this view of the scope of the apostle's language is abundantly confirmed by the word which St. Paul employs

⁶ Ver. 18.⁷ Ver. 19.

to describe the Spirit as *helping our infirmities*.⁷ For there is an emphasis in the original word, which, in exact accordance with what I have said in two former sections⁸ respecting the co-operation of our spirits with the Spirit who helpeth us, plainly intimates the obligation under which the children of God are placed to exert their little strength, feeble as it is, in concurrence with this Almighty aid.

Observe, in conclusion, the striking representation which is here given to us of the nature of prayer: *groanings which cannot be uttered*! Yes, brethren, the Holy Spirit sometimes excites in the children of God such ardency of devotion, and such vehement compunctions, that their hearts are too full for utterance. The prayer of the believer is often the unutterable groaning of a heart which deeply feels its misery, its poverty, and its impotence. But are these *groanings* concealed from God? No, says the apostle, *He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God*. If it is the Holy Spirit who himself prayeth within us, assuredly he, who gave him to his children, to be in them as their teacher and their guide, must *know what is the mind of the Spirit*. *He that searcheth the heart, knows, therefore, that the prayers of his children*

⁷ συναρτιλαμβάνεται Dod.Irid, e in loc

⁸ Sect. xxii. and xxxii.

do not proceed from their own natural desires, but that they are conformable to his most holy and blessed will. And “as the mother knoweth the cry of her own infant, though an hundred other children cry; and liketh it better than the eloquent oration and learned speech of some other, who is but a stranger to her; even so God is better pleased with the unutterable groans and ardent breathings of believers, than with the pompous and long petitions of hypocrites.”⁹

SECTION XXVI.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 28—30.

THE HOPES AND THE CONSOLATIONS OF BELIEVERS TRACED
TO THEIR ETERNAL SOURCE.

We are still occupied with the important subject of Christian suffering. In explaining the passage which formed the subject of the last section, I endeavoured to point out to you the full emphasis of the apostle's declaration, with respect to all who *wait with patience for the glory to be revealed in them*, that they are *saved by hope*. Whatever may be the trials and afflictions of the children of God,

⁹ Thomas Wilson in loc.

in assured *hope* they are *saved*. By the power of their *hope* they lay hold of the fulness of salvation, because God has truly promised, and because faith has surely believed that promise.

St. Paul now opens a new door of consolation to the Christian sufferer, by assuring him that the afflictions of the children of God are not to be regarded by them as hindrances, but as furtherances of their salvation; and he strengthens this assurance by exhibiting that golden chain of divine mercy and grace by which, so to speak, the children of God are drawn up to heaven!

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*¹

1. I would first observe to you, brethren, on the passage before us, that, when viewed in connexion with that part of the chapter which has already passed under review, the things here spoken of evidently apply to those only who, as it is said in the first verse, *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. The apostle, at the fourteenth verse, expressly declares, of all such, as being *led by the*

¹ Ver. 18—30.

Spirit of God, that they are the *sons of God*. And, as I have before remarked, from that verse to the end of this remarkable chapter, St. Paul addresses, exclusively, these children of God, reminding them how they are called upon to *suffer with Christ*, that so they may be also *glorified together*. Now in the portion which is immediately before us, the apostle describes them, you observe, by a new title; viz. as those who *love God*. And as the love of God's children towards their heavenly Father is only the reflection of the beams of his love towards them, it is with equal beauty and propriety that St. Paul, in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses, follows up the expression of *them that love God*, by speaking of the *original love of God to them*, as manifested in the subsequent effects which flow from that love.

Yes, brethren, if you know what it is to *love God*, you may assuredly regard your love to him, as a clear testimony of his eternal love to you. For your choosing him, is the effect and the evidence of his choosing you.² And if ever, therefore, you feel tempted to question your heavenly Father's love to you, feel the pulse of your affections, which way it beats, and ask your own heart whether you are among the number of *them that love God*; even the God who is revealed to you in scripture. I say, *the God revealed to you in scripture*; for we must be very careful not to con-

² See John xv. 16, and 1 John iv. 19.

found the real character of God with that which we may have formed of him for ourselves. Among those who profess and call themselves Christians, there are many who revolt against the charge that their minds are naturally at enmity against God; only because they are utterly ignorant of the God whom the Bible reveals to us. For it is easy, alas! to form in our imaginations a being very much resembling ourselves; a being who will allow us to live, in a great measure, as we may please, easily forgiving our offences, and ready to bestow eternal happiness upon all his creatures, even upon such as may have been total strangers to a life of purity and holiness. But is this the being whom the Bible reveals to us? Let the Bible return the answer. Let us view the attributes of God, not as we have chosen to picture them to ourselves, but as they are exhibited in the history of the atonement; let us view him as awfully and unalterably just, even while he is the *justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*; ³ and then let us say how we can hope to be numbered among *them that love God*, unless his grace has enabled us to mortify every sinful and corrupt affection; yea, to cut off the offending right hand, and to pluck out the offending right eye, and to “bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” ⁴

2. Having thus dwelt upon the full force of the expression of *loving God*, I would now proceed to

³ Chap. iii. 26.

⁴ 2 Cor. x. 5.

observe, secondly, that St. Paul here plainly teaches us to argue from the effect to the cause.⁵ For, as we go on to the last clause of the twenty-eighth verse, we find that all who *love God*, are the *called according to his purpose*. Yes, brethren, it is the *love of God*, ruling in the hearts of those who were once at enmity with him, which proves that they have been *called according to his purpose*; and all such may take to themselves the blessed assurance contained in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses, viz. that as they have been *predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ*, so they shall hereafter enter into his *glory*. To speak on this mysterious subject, in the language of Archbishop Leighton; “The *foreknowledge of God*, and the *complete salvation* of the believer are as the two links of the chain, which are up in heaven in God’s own hand; but there is a middle link, our *effectual calling*, which is let down to earth into the hearts of his children; and they, laying hold of it by faith, have sure hold of the other two, for no power can sever them. If, therefore, by a true and lively faith, they can read the characters of God’s image in their own souls, these are the counterparts of the golden characters

⁵ Indeed the whole of this chapter may be regarded as a specimen of the same mode of argument. St. Paul declares, in the first verse, that there is *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*; and, after enlarging on their hopes and their privileges, he now pronounces, of all such, that they are the *called according to God’s purpose*.

of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the *revealed* book of life, the scriptures; and so ascertains them that the same names are in the *secret* book of life, which God hath by himself from everlasting. So that finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns; yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth, from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation!"⁶

Before I pass on to the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses, I would observe that the expression of the *called according to God's purpose*, may be illustrated by two parallel passages in other epistles of St. Paul; the one at the beginning of his second epistle to Timothy; the other at the beginning of his epistle to the Ephesians. In writing to Timothy,⁷ our apostle solemnly reminds him of the "power of God; who," as he goes on to say, "hath saved us, and called us with an *holy calling*, not according to *our works*, but according to his

⁶ I subjoin a short, but striking passage, from Watson's *Divine Cordial*. "When a man's eyes are so weak that he cannot look up to the firmament, yet he may know that the moon is there, by seeing it shine upon the water, so, though I do not look up into the secret of God's purpose, yet I may know that I am elected, by the shining of sanctifying grace in my soul."

⁷ 2 Tim. i. 8, 9.

own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” And, in writing to the Ephesians,⁸ he speaks of “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as having “*chosen us in Christ* before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy and without blame before him in love* : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will*, to the praise of the glory of his grace.” I have placed these two passages immediately after the language employed by the apostle in the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter, because, in each and all of these scriptures, we are taught to view the eternal purpose of God in immediate connexion with *grace and salvation* ; because we are here encouraged, amidst all our doubts and all our trials, to *argue from the effect to the cause*, always regarding a *life of holiness* as the evidence of our *eternal election in Christ* ; and because, at the same time, we are warned against a self-righteous spirit, by the solemn declaration that we are to ascribe all we are, and all we do, wholly to the “good pleasure of God’s will, to the praise of the glory of his grace !”

3. Being thus animated, therefore, on the one hand, by the scriptural representation of God’s eternal “purpose and grace,” to abound in that holy obedience which is the *evidence of our faith* ; and being thus reminded, on the other hand, when we

⁸ Eph. i. 3—6.

look to our *title to eternal life*, that we are “ saved, not according to our works, but according to God’s own purpose and grace ;” let us now pass on to the two following verses of the present chapter, in which the apostle prepares believers for *passive*, as well as *active*, obedience, by proving, from the consideration of the everlasting purpose of God, that *all things must indeed work together for good, to them that love God. For whom he did foreknow, says St. Paul, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* In using the above words in the past tense, an idiom very usual in Scripture, to denote the certainty of the truths which are inculcated, our apostle seems, as it were, to take his stand at the goal of the christian race, and thence to look back to that eternal decree which has awarded the crown of glory to all who shall “ run with patience the race which is set before them, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.”¹ Now it is expressly said of this “ author and finisher of our faith,” that “ for the joy which was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame ;” and when St. Paul declares, therefore, in the passage now before us, that *whom God did foreknow, he also did pre-*

¹ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

destinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, we conclude, not only from the general scope of his present argument, which is on the subject of Christian suffering, but from the whole tenor of the gospel, that he refers chiefly to the trials and afflictions through which the children of God are to pass while waiting for the day of their public *adoption* in the kingdom of glory. But we know that, the *conformity* to our Saviour's image, though commenced on *earth*, is to be perfected in *heaven*; and when St. Paul declares, therefore, with regard to all who *love God*, that they have been *predestinated to be CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON*, may we not indeed conclude, (and, oh! that this conclusion were well weighed by those who have not yet learned to exchange the "sorrow of the world which worketh death,"² for that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation!") that if we "*suffer* here with Christ, we shall also *reign* with him hereafter?"³

The apostle, you observe, makes express mention only of *predestination*, *calling*, *justification*, and *glory*. And it has been sometimes asked, therefore, how it comes to pass that *sanctification* should not be expressly mentioned in the golden chain which is here exhibited to us? But surely, brethren, the obvious answer is, that *sanctification* is included in *glory*. For it is not so much the way to glory, as it is a part and beginning of it

² 2 Cor. vii. 10.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

even here. So that sanctification is glory begun on earth, while glory is sanctification perfected in heaven. Be it remembered, moreover, that the absolute necessity of Christian holiness, is the very point on which St. Paul is insisting through the whole of his present argument; for in this and the two preceding chapters, he has been reminding believers, that though they are freed from the law, as a *covenant*, yet that, as a *rule of holy living*, they are still subject, nay that it is their privilege to be subject, to the law. And must it not follow, therefore, that with all true believers, justification and sanctification will be indissolubly joined together? The believer knows, indeed, that the *ground of his justification* is wholly distinct from any thing which he either *has done*, or *can do*; but it is this very knowledge which leads him to serve God continually, under a sweet and joyful sense of security, and to strive, in all things, to promote his glory, with all the affectionate feelings of a child who thinks that he can never do enough to evince his gratitude to a tender and indulgent father. The believer works, as our old reformers used to express it, not *for* salvation, but *from* salvation; not that he *may* be justified, but *because he is justified*.

Behold, then, my Christian brethren, that golden chain by which the children of God are drawn up from earth to heaven! Behold the steps and de-

grees by which God's eternal love descends upon his children, and by which they climb up to their promised glory ! Behold the grounds on which the children of God take up the language of the beloved disciple, and say, " We love him, because he first loved us ! " ⁴ It has been truly said of the scripture now before you, that it is one of the deepest, and yet one of the clearest scriptures about God's method of salvation. ⁵ And if you will always view it, as you always ought to view it, in immediate connexion with the whole scope of the context in which it is found, you will plainly see that St. Paul introduces it, not that he may encourage keen and unprofitable disputations, but that, by leading the children of God to trace up every thing which befalls them, to the fountain of eternal love, he may remind them how, under all the trials to which they are exposed, they should derive comfort from the blessed assurance that *all things shall indeed work together for their good !*

Reserving the apostle's own application of these solemn truths for the next section, I would here take occasion to remind you that the same practical view of these doctrines is exhibited in the seventeenth Article of our church ; and I earnestly pray, brethren, that we may have that internal evidence of our own *predestination to life* of which that Article speaks, " feeling in ourselves the work-

⁴ 1 John iv. 19.

⁵ Traill.

ing of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and our earthly members, and drawing up our minds to high and heavenly things !”⁶

In approaching the consideration of the above Article, the good Bishop Beveridge reminds us that “it concerns God’s predestination, which must needs be infinitely above man’s apprehension. So that a cockle-fish may as soon crowd the ocean into its narrow cell, as vain man ever comprehend the decrees of God.” And in proceeding, therefore, to illustrate the language of the Article, he endeavours only to declare what Scripture and the Fathers have expressly delivered on the subject. Among his extracts from the writings of the Fathers of the early Christian church, we find a very important passage from Augustine ; and I here subjoin it, as serving powerfully to remind us that whenever we touch upon this holy mystery, it should be for this one end ; viz. that we may thereby be spurred on to a more active obedience to the divine will. “It is,” says Augustine, “of too much contention either to deny or to doubt of predestination ; and yet this is not so to be preached among the people that it may become liable to reproach among the simple or the ignorant. For, doubtless, this sacred doctrine *will* suffer reproach, if we say to our hearers, ‘Whether you run or sleep, what God foreknew you *would* be, that you *will* be.’ It is only the unskilful physician who so applies a

⁶ Art. xvii.

profitable medicine, that it either fails of producing good, or actually occasions harm. But the language of the true Christian preacher will always be, ‘ So run that you may obtain ;’⁷ and, in your *very running*, you shall assuredly bring home to your heart the blessed persuasion that God *ordained* your entrance on this Christian course. In faith and in prayer, ‘ hold the beginning of your confidence stedfast unto the end,’⁸ and, in doing this, be assured, that God has indeed *predestinated you to be conformed to the image of his Son* ; seeing that it is he, and he only, who, by giving you the grace of perseverance, has *enabled* you thus to ‘ run the way of his commandments.’⁹

Were this the manner, brethren, in which the ministers of Christ always applied to their hearers this high and holy mystery, it would then afford, as it is so well suited to afford, the strongest consolation to every true believer. And if you consider the order and connexion in which the seventeenth Article is placed, you will conclude that such was the light in which the doctrine must have been regarded by the Fathers of our church. For it immediately follows the Article respecting *sin after baptism*,¹ an Article which is evidently so framed as to guard the trembling penitent against despair ; and by thus going on to speak to him, therefore, of *predestination to life*, and his *election*

⁷ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

⁸ Heb. iii. 14.

⁹ Ps. cxix. 32.

¹ See Art. xvi.

in Christ, it seems to take him by the hand, and to point to the “strong consolation,” which this doctrine provides for every child of God, by revealing Him unto us as “willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel!”² Let us always view the seventeenth Article of our church in this connexion; and I may venture to say of it, as I have been saying of the passage of scripture which is now before us, and which forms, indeed, the *ground-work* of the Article, viz. that it will not be perverted by us, as it has been by many, into an occasion for spiritual pride or angry disputation, but that it will be regarded by us as affording a ground of strong and abiding consolation; and as yielding a refuge and a shelter into which we may run and be safe, amidst all the trials and afflictions of this unquiet world. For, as I may ask in conclusion, what can be suited to speak peace to the weary or trembling soul more effectually than the plain declaration of those gracious purposes of mercy, which God, in Christ, has decreed for his children, from all eternity; which he has now revealed in time; and which shall endure through everlasting ages? Or what can seal that declaration to our hearts more powerfully than the assurance which the Scriptures contain, that those purposes of mercy rest, not upon our poor and defiled performances, but upon the “immutability

² See Heb. vi. 17, 18.

of God's counsel?" Our graces will always be imperfect; our comforts will continually ebb and flow; but "God's foundation standeth sure;"³ and if we shew, therefore, by *loving God*, that we are built upon the rock of God's *eternal purpose*, we may be sure that even the "gates of hell shall not prevail against us!"⁴

SECTION XXVII.

CHAP. VIII. ver. 31—39.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

We come now to that animated and sublime application of the whole argument of Christian suffering, which may be well entitled the *triumph of faith*; and I pray that, with our hearts deeply penetrated by a faith such as this, we may be able to meet every trial and every conflict, which we may be called to encounter, in the spirit of triumphant assurance which is here exhibited.

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*¹ St. Paul has been looking back as far as to the first blessed

³ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 18.

¹ Ver. 31.

design and purpose of God toward his children, before the foundation of the world, even *from everlasting*; and in pursuing his bright and joyful theme, he has been looking forward beyond the end of the world, even *to everlasting*. And can we wonder that, at such a view of such a subject, he should in a manner pause and stop, as if overwhelmed with the greatness of the prospect; and that, as if at a loss for words, he should exclaim *WHAT shall we then say to these things?* He speaks, it is true, inspired by the Spirit of God; but the subject of which he is speaking is the *love of God*, and the language which he is employing is only the *language of MEN*: *what shall we then say to THESE THINGS?* God has, indeed, declared himself to be *for us* by choosing us, by calling us, by justifying us, by sanctifying us, and by designing to glorify us hereafter? And, as the apostle asks, representing all true believers, *If God be thus for us, who can be against us?* “When we were not,” says Augustine, “God *predestinated* us; when we ran from him and desired to follow the vain imaginations of our own sinful hearts, he *called* us to him; when we were unrighteous, he *justified* us; when we were impure, he *sanctified* us; and, after a short time spent in his obedience and service, he will *glorify* us! When we consider, therefore, that whoever fighteth against God’s children, fighteth against God himself, their Father, and their all-sufficient Protector, may we

not well exclaim with holy confidence, ‘ *who can be against us?* ’ ”

In the above verse we have seen how St. Paul breaks out into admiration at the number and the greatness of God’s blessings. But, in the thirty-second verse, he seems, as it were, to recollect himself, and to shew that though believers receive all things from God, yet in some sense they have but *one thing* at which they are called upon to wonder. He seems to tell them that, after receiving the gift of his Son, they need not doubt or wonder at any thing else: yea, that the wonder would be, if *after that*, any thing else could be withheld: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*² The emphasis is evidently laid here, not on Christ, as incarnate, being given up to death for us; but on God’s giving *his own Son*, to become incarnate for that purpose.³ And when the apostle speaks of *him that SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON*, we are forcibly reminded of the very significant passage in Genesis,⁴ where we read that the “angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven,” and said, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, *thine only son*, from me.” When the apostle speaks of it, moreover, as an affecting proof of God’s love, that he *spared not his own Son, but*

² Ver. 32.

³ Scott in loc.

⁴ Gen. xxii. 11, 12, and 16.

delivered HIM up for us all, we plainly infer that there is no proportion whatever between *him* and *us*, even all of us put together ! And it is equally manifest, from the apostle's language, that we are to consider this gift of God's *own Son* for the work of redemption, not only as a very great mercy, but as absolutely the *greatest* of all mercies ; not only as a high manifestation of love, but as the *highest* ; not only as an excellent gift, but as the *chief gift*. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us ALL THINGS ?*

But still, brethren, when the Christian sufferer thinks of the glories of the heavenly inheritance, he may feel tempted to ask whether there may not, perhaps, be some one either to *accuse* or to *condemn* him. In order, therefore, to silence every such unbelieving fear, the apostle goes on to say ; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*³ On the one hand, does the believer fear that he shall be *accused* ? *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect*, when it is God himself who freely *justifieth* and acquitteth them ? Who can *accuse*, when God *cleareth* and *absolveth* them ? Satan, indeed, may appear against God's

³ Ver. 33, 34.

children ; the world may revile them ; their own consciences may reproach them with many sins ; the law may remind them of many former and later transgressions ; but God himself pleads their cause : he pronounces them righteous, silences their accuser, pacifies their consciences, clears their characters, and shews the law magnified, and justice satisfied, in the obedience and sufferings of their Surety ; and *who*, then, can make good any charge against them ? On the other hand, does the believer fear that he shall be *condemned* ? This Scripture assures all the children of God, that there cannot be any danger of their utter condemnation ; for *who* is he that can condemn them ? He who shall be their *Judge*, even Christ Jesus, is he who *died* for them ; *yea, rather*, he who shall be their Judge, is he who hath triumphed over death for them, *being risen again* from the dead for their full justification : and, to sum up all, he who shall be their Judge, is he who now sitteth gloriously *at the right hand of God*, there making perpetual *intercession for them*.⁶ Surely, if any persons may use the language of holy and triumphant confidence, it is they who, having received the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts by faith, can see his amazing love for their souls in every part of the history of redemption ; viewing him as a victim in his death, as a glorious conqueror in his resurrection, as a mediator and high priest in his ascension, and as an advocate at the right

⁶ Hall, Cradock, and Scott in loc.

hand of the Father, "ever living to make intercession for them."⁷ Yes, brethren, it is Christ, in his death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, who is the ground of the believer's justification before God, and of his joy of faith. The children of God know, indeed, that they should look on *themselves* as often and as narrowly as they can; and they know that they should judge and condemn themselves for all their manifold transgressions, in thought, word, and deed, of God's holy law: but they know also that, when they look for acceptance with God, they must regard *Christ alone*, and that they must give him glory by trusting confidently for such acceptance, only in and through him!

Filled with a sense of the power and love of Christ, as thus gloriously manifested in the history of redemption, St. Paul now makes a bold challenge to all things around him, above him, and beneath him, and says, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor*

⁷ Heb. vii. 25.

depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ⁸

Is this *he*, says Archbishop Leighton, ⁹ who so lately cried out, *O wretched man that I am ! who shall DELIVER ME ?* Can it be he who now exclaims, with holy rapture, *who shall ACCUSE ? who shall CONDEMN ? who shall SEPARATE us from the love of Christ ?* Yes, it is the same. He was then viewing the *body of death* which he carried about him ; and this forced him to cry out and ask, who would *deliver* him from it ? Now he looks to the great *Deliverer*, who has heard his piercing cry ! He is for ever united to him by faith, and he glories in this *inseparable* union, and in his *unalterable* love. So different is the condition of the believer, when considered in *himself*, and in *Christ*. When he views himself in *himself*, he is nothing but a poor, polluted, perishing outcast ; but when he looks again, and sees himself in *Christ*, then he is rich, and safe, and happy ! In Christ he triumphs above all the painted prosperities, and against all the sharpest adversities of the world : he *lives in Christ*, and laughs at all his enemies !

What, then, though the believer may be called to encounter *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword ?* Shall any or all of these *separate him from the love of Christ* ;

⁸ Ver. 35—39.

⁹ Leighton's works, vol. iii.

or prevent him from enjoying the sweet *sense of that love*? No, brethren, these are but the trials of faith; and though he, who hath conquered death and hell, might, if it so pleased him, exempt his people from these trials, yet it is more glorious to him, and more profitable for them, that they should feel the power of his grace in supporting them amidst them all. He calls his people forth, therefore, to honourable services, and to arduous conflicts. He sets them on, one to encounter sickness, another poverty, another reproaches and persecutions, nay, even death itself, for his sake. And it is in his strength, that they hold out in all their conflicts, and finally obtain the conquest. Yea, says the apostle, *in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us!*

Observe, I beseech you, the emphasis of these words: first, *MORE than conquerors*; and, secondly, *THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US*. The apostle describes believers, in the first place, as being *more than conquerors*. In all their spiritual conflicts, they are *more than conquerors*, because their graces are so improved by them, that they gain in them all fresh honour and fresh strength; and thus, by being the better prepared for each succeeding conflict, they are *more than simple conquerors*. Unlike other conquerors, moreover, believers are sure that they shall not lose any former conquests, but that they shall continue to add more, and to conquer on to the end.

Earthly conquerors often outlive their own successes and renown, and lose, on a sudden, what they have been gaining during their whole lifetime. But not so with the children of God. They stand secure in the great Author of all their victories; for, as the apostle adds, in the second place, they are *more than conquerors through him that loved them*. It is in his strength, that they go on, “conquering, and to conquer,”¹ and they are quite sure that he will pursue his triumphant march until all his “enemies” shall be made “his footstool!”²

It is in the joyful contemplation of Christ’s glorious power, that St. Paul passes on, as we have seen, to the climax of this sublime scripture. He has given the challenge to all the evils which befall believers in the course of their earthly pilgrimage, viz. to *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword*; and he has declared that *in all these things they are more than conquerors through him that loved them*: or, as the particular form of the original verb³ may be taken to imply, *through him that HATH LOVED, DOES LOVE, AND WILL LOVE US, even to the end*. And now, to shew how confidently he made the above declaration, he takes up the last and the worst of the evils already enumerated, and beginning, therefore, with *death*, he avows his assurance of full and

¹ Rev. vi. 2.² Ps. cx. 1.³ Viz. the Aorist δια του αγαπησαντος.

final victory against all the imaginable power of all the creatures. Yes, says the apostle, *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*; for when I think of his mighty power, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* And well might he express such a persuasion as this; for what is death to believers, even in all its most terrible forms, seeing that Christ *died* for them? Or, what is to them the hope or love of the most desirable *life*; seeing that “their life is hid with him,”⁴ who is *risen again* from the dead? Or what are *angels, principalities, or powers*; what are *things present, or things to come*: or what is *height, or depth, or any other creature*, seeing that Christ is even at the right hand of God, making intercession for them?

My Christian brethren; such was the height of triumphant assurance to which the apostle attained, as he dwelt upon that *love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The one great argument which he was continually pressing home upon his own heart was this, viz. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also keep us from all evil, as well as*

⁴ Col. iii. 3.

enrich us with all good ! This was the secret of the apostle's holy and joyful confidence. He dwelt perpetually upon this *gift of the Son of God*, in the work of redemption ; and, as I have already observed, he dwelt upon it not only as a very great mercy, but as absolutely the *greatest* of all mercies ; not only as a high manifestation of love, but as the *highest* ; not only as an excellent gift, but as the *chief gift*. And if we, therefore, would partake of the apostle's joyful triumph, we must habitually contemplate the gift of the Son of God in the work of redemption in the same peculiar light ; regarding it as God's chief mercy, and regarding our cordial acceptance of it as the indispensable preparation for every other blessing. For let us only consider how it is everywhere distinctly implied that we must first receive Christ, before we can have any share in the other mercies which belong to the children of God. It is not simply because we *suffer* here, that we are to be *glorified* hereafter.⁵ No, brethren, the express condition is, that we *suffer* WITH CHRIST ; and then, but not otherwise, the promise is, that we shall be *also glorified together*. If, indeed, we *reject Christ*, how shall we hope to stand, in our own strength, against *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword* ? But if we have really received him into our hearts by faith, and are thus numbered among *them that love God*, then we shall

⁵ Ver. 17.

know what it is to find *all things*, even *tribulation, distress, and death, working together for good* ! Do we, then, feel our hearts continually beating with this heavenly love ? Do we feel it glowing within us as a flame which “many waters cannot quench ?”⁶ If so, we may conclude with joyfulness, that such love to God is but the return of those beams which issue from the throne of the Eternal ; and we may rest in the sweet persuasion that, amidst all the trials and conflicts of life, we shall indeed be *more than conquerors through him that loved us*. In one word, do we feel this heavenly grace constraining us to “bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,”⁷ and leading us to abound, day by day, in thankfulness for his grace, and in devotedness to his service ? If so, we may apply to ourselves the blessed declaration of Scripture, that “we thus love God, because he first loved us ;”⁸ and, knowing this, we may be indeed *persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* !

⁶ Sol. Song viii. 7.⁷ 2 Cor. x. 5.⁸ 1 John iv. 19.

SECTION XXVIII.

CHAP. IX. ver. 1—5.

ST. PAUL'S TENDER AND AFFECTIONATE CONCERN FOR THE
JEWS, HIS KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.

In the first chapter of this epistle, St. Paul describes the Gospel of Christ, as the *power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*. The first truth which is here laid down, is the perfect efficacy of the Gospel unto salvation ; and *this* may be said to form the groundwork of the luminous argument respecting justification, and sanctification, which is carried on to the end of the eighth chapter. The other part of the apostle's proposition respects the *universal extent* of this saving efficacy of the Gospel : it is the *power of God unto salvation* TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH ; *to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*. And this division of his argument, which has hitherto been touched upon only in an indirect and incidental manner,² is now prosecuted very fully through the ninth and the two following chapters.

When we view these three remaining chapters of the argumentative part of the epistle,³ with im-

¹ Chap. i. 16.

² See chap. ii. and iv.

³ See Young on the Epistle to the Romans.

mediate reference to what has gone before, we are led to observe how plainly the calling of the Gentiles is interwoven with every part of the whole argument; and it is quite evident that *with* this calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews has a close and necessary connexion. For if the Jews be *still* God's favoured and peculiar people, then must all that has been said concerning the admission of the Gentiles to God's favour, through faith in Christ, and their participation of the promises made to Abraham, notwithstanding the seeming strength of the arguments by which it is supported, fall to the ground. But if the Gentiles be *called*, then are the Jews no longer the peculiar people of God. Now this, as we may readily conceive, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, such as hardly any force of reasoning could remove; and keeping this in mind, we shall more fully appreciate the touching expressions of tenderness, with which, in the present section, St. Paul introduces the subject of this and the two following chapters. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom*

as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. ⁴

The language which the apostle here employs is admirably suited to meet one of the first objections which might be made against what he should say, touching the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. For it might perhaps be insinuated, that he had no great attachment to his countrymen; or it might even be suggested, that the persecutions which he had endured from them, had entirely estranged his affections. He deems it necessary, therefore, to introduce this solemn topic by expressing, in the most affecting and energetic manner, his cordial affection for his *kinsman according to the flesh*; thus plainly shewing them that, in declaring these unwelcome truths, he was actuated, not by any angry or resentful feelings, but by the love and tenderness which he had for them, coupled with a just regard to the honour of Almighty God. *I say the truth in CHRIST, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the HOLY GHOST*; (observe how the apostle here appeals to the second and third persons of the ever blessed Trinity, as being one with the Father in the power of the divine Majesty;) *that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

⁴ Ver. 1—5.

Penetrated, as he so emphatically declares, with *great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart*, on account of the danger and the misery of his brethren; filled with shame on account of their perverseness and obstinacy; and glowing with an ardent desire for the salvation of their souls, and for the glory of God, in the accomplishment of such a mighty work, the apostle, in a holy exstasy, here passes on from that triumphant exercise of faith which we witnessed at the conclusion of the last chapter, to the highest exercise of a love kindled with fire from heaven. *I could wish*, he says, *that myself were accursed, or separated⁵ from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* According to the sense of the word given in the margin, St. Paul seems to say that he could be well content to be *separated*, or *excluded*, for a time, from all the comfort of *communion with Christ*, and to be *set apart as a devoted person*, in the place of his brethren the Jews, so that the judgments to be inflicted on them might fall on himself. The form of the original verb⁶ would seem to convey a *conditional* signification; and, so understood, the apostle's language obviously resembles that passage in the gospel of St. Matthew, where our blessed Lord, speaking of "false Christs and false prophets," declares that, "*if it were possible,*

⁵ *αναθεμα*. See margin.

⁶ *ηνχομην*. Vide Bengel in loc.

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 24.

they should deceive the very elect.” Indeed, when writing to the Galatians, our apostle, to describe the greatness of their love towards himself, employs the very same expression, “bearing them record that, *if it had been possible*, they would have plucked out their own own eyes, and given them to him.”⁸ And it is quite manifest that the same *condition* is implied both in the passage before us, and in another passage in the epistle to the Galatians, where he says, with such solemn emphasis, *though we, or an angel from heaven*, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*.⁹ In these words, the apostle evidently employs an illustration taken from *that which could never come to pass*, in order that he may the more powerfully declare the sinfulness of those who should, either then, or in after ages, attempt to pervert the Gospel of Christ. And is it not equally apparent that, in the passage before us, his love to his unhappy brethren, hurries him away, so to speak, to the utterance of a wish, of which, as we may be allowed to conjecture, he could not *himself* have defined the full signification or extent?

There is one more instance of the like kind in Scripture, and but one, that is related of mere man, viz. the instance of Moses, when interceding

⁸ Gal. iv. 15.

⁹ Gal. i. 8.

for his countrymen, after they had made the golden calf.¹ But what, let me ask you, brethren, what do all these instances prove? Strongly as they evince the power of divine grace, they yet serve only to prove that Christ's love immeasurably exceeds all other love! For while Moses desired to die, rather than live to see his nation perish, and while St. Paul desired, in a qualified sense,² (for so his language must be understood,) to be set apart, if it were possible, in the stead of his own brethren, Christ was indeed, in the *fullest sense*, made a curse, not for those who were *friends or brethren*, but for the *ungodly*, for *sinner*s, yea, for his avowed and obstinate *enemies*.³

Thus far St. Paul has spoken of his love to the Jews, as his *brethren*, his *kinsmen according to the flesh*. In other words, he has hitherto spoken of his regard for them on *private* grounds. But he now goes on to declare to them that, besides this his natural affection to them, there were other, and more *public* grounds, which might well call forth the exercise of all the powers of his soul in their behalf. For he remembered that they were the people whom God had distinguished with many and glorious privileges: and proceeding, therefore, to enumerate those privileges, he speaks of his

¹ Ex. xxxii. 32, comp. with Numb. xi. 15. Vide Waterland's works, 8vo. vol. ix. p. 260; and Bengel on Rom. ix. 3.

² See Bengel on the difference between *avathema* and *katapa*.

³ Chap. v. 6, 8, 10.

brethren, as being those highly favoured persons, who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and service of God, and the promises ; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

St. Paul here speaks of them, in the first place, as *Israelites* ; as the descendants of that patriarch, who wrestled with God for the blessing, and who was therefore named “ Israel,”⁴ or a “ prince of God.” We learn, from Israel’s prayer,⁵ that he deemed it a privilege to have his children called by his name ; and the apostle grieves to think that a people once consecrated to the true God, who himself chose to be called the God of Israel, should be *separated* from his favour, and become the monuments of his righteous vengeance.

The apostle then enumerates the six following privileges which pertained to them as *Israelites*, or the chosen people of God ; viz. their *adoption*, from among all the nations of the earth, to be accounted God’s own family ; the *glory*, or the presence of God, manifesting itself, in a more peculiar manner, from between the cherubims of the ark ; *the covenants* ; i. e. the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants ; *the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.*

To the above-mentioned prerogatives of the

⁴ Gen. xxxii. 28.

⁵ Gen. xlviii. 16.

children of Israel, the apostle subjoins two others ; viz. that *theirs are the fathers*, and that *of them, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*. *Theirs*, he says, *are the fathers* ; and surely this was no ordinary commendation, that they should be born of such *fathers* as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men whose praise is in the word, and who had the promises of God's mercy unto their posterity, for a thousand generations. But now comes the last, and the highest dignity of all ; that which forms the climax of the whole ; viz. that *of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever !* When St. Paul says, respecting the Jews, that they are *his brethren, his kinsmen* ACCORDING TO THE FLESH ; he plainly implies, that there is a brotherhood and a kinsmanship, *not according to the flesh, but by spiritual regeneration*. And, in like manner, when he here speaks of Christ, as being come of the Jews, *as concerning the FLESH*, it must have been inferred, even though it had not been formally expressed, that he had an origin, or existence, wholly independent of them ; in other words, that he had a far higher and nobler nature. But this solemn and important truth is not only implied, but plainly and expressly declared in the passage before us. For the apostle adds, that he is *over all, God blessed for ever*. He who *came of the Jews*, is here called *God*. It is evident, however, that he is not so called *as he*

came of them ; but that his descent from them, *as concerning the flesh*, is here plainly distinguished from his *Godhead*.⁶ He is called *God*, moreover, not as being one of the many gods, which men have chosen to worship, but as being the one supreme, or most high God ; *God OVER ALL*. St. Paul has also added the title of *blessed*, which of itself elsewhere signifies the supreme God,⁷ and which was always used by the Jews to express the one God of Israel. Now if we look to the scope of the apostle, we find that he is here magnifying the Israelites by the enumeration of such privileges as belonged peculiarly to that chosen nation, the most eminent of which consisted in the genealogy of our Saviour. But it is quite manifest that their glory could not consist in this, viz. that Christ should at first have been born of them a *man*, and afterwards made a *God* ; for, as Bishop Pearson asks, what great honour could have accrued to them by the nativity of a man, whose godhead would have been thus referred, not to his *birth*, but to his *death* ? It follows, therefore, that the peculiar glory of that nation consisted in this ; viz. that the most high *God blessed for ever*, should yet have taken on him “ the seed of Abraham,”⁸ and should have *come of the Israelites, as concerning the flesh* !

⁶ See Bishop Pearson on the Creed.

⁷ See Mark xiv. 61.

⁸ Heb. ii. 16.

When we contemplate the apostle pondering in his heart these high prerogatives of his *brethren*, his *kinsmen according to the flesh*, and then reflecting that, through their wilful blindness, all these marks of the divine favour would not only not profit them, but turn to their destruction; can we wonder that he should have had *great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart*? And yet, brethren, what are the things here spoken of but a prophetic representation of the inestimable advantages of the Christian church? All those gracious promises which were foreshadowed in the types and ceremonies of the elder dispensation, are now brought home to the heart of every true believer; and all who are indeed “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,”⁹ have for their *Father*, the God of the patriarchs, and for their *elder brother*, that eternal Word who, in his human nature, is “bone of their bones, and flesh of their flesh;”¹ while, in his divine nature, he is the beginning and the end of every creature, yea, *over all, God blessed for ever*. He has himself expressly declared, that “whosoever shall do the will of his Father, which is in heaven, the same is his *brother*, and *sister*, and *mother* ;”² and what, I would ask, is all earthly kindred compared to this? or what words can express our folly, if we despise the blessing which is thus offered to us? Is it really true, that all

⁹ Gal. iii. 26.¹ Gen. ii. 23.² Matt. xii. 50.

and every one of us may be so near and dear to Christ, and so beloved of Him; and shall we slight so noble a privilege, or sell our Christian birthright for anything which this world can offer us? No, brethren, whatever it may cost us, let us resolve to belong to Christ; and leaning always upon the hope of God's heavenly grace, let us not think any thing too difficult to do, or too grievous to suffer, that we may be owned by him as "his brother, sister, and mother!" And when we consider the greatness of the privilege, of which we are thus invited to partake, let us not cease to pray to our heavenly Father, beseeching him "so to assist us with his grace, that we may *continue in that holy fellowship*, and do all such good works as he has prepared for us to walk in, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord!"³

³ Communion office.

SECTION XXIX.

CHAP. ix. ver. 6—18.

THE TRUTH, THE SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD
ILLUSTRATED BY THE EXAMPLES OF ISAAC, OF JACOB
AND ESAU, AND OF PHARAOH.

The admission of the Gentiles to the divine favour, coupled, as it necessarily was, with the rejection of the Jews, as a nation, from being God's peculiar people, was, as I observed in the last section, a stumbling-block to the latter, such as scarcely any force of reasoning could remove. For that they should ever be cast off, was, as they considered, contrary to God's *veracity* and *justice*; it was contrary, as they supposed, "to the oath which he had sworn unto Abraham," and which he had confirmed "to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant."

The Jews, however, *are* rejected, and the Gentiles called; and this, as the apostle proceeds to shew, without any impeachment of the divine perfections ² 1. He shews, on the one hand, that the

¹ 1 Chr. xvi. 16, 17; Ps. cv. 9, 10.

² Young on the Epistle to the Romans.

Jews are rejected, without any impeachment of God's *veracity*; seeing that the children of Abraham, to whom God's word was engaged, were not his seed according to the flesh, but his spiritual seed.

2. And he shews, on the other hand, that the Gentiles are called, without any impeachment of God's *justice*; seeing that he had always a *sovereign right* to select what objects he pleased of his special and unmerited favours. 3. And if the Jews should still revert to the subject of their own rejection, and should regard it as an impeachment of the divine justice, St. Paul reminds them, that when God's forbearance and long-suffering only tend to harden sinners in their wicked courses, he may, whenever he sees fit, make them signal examples of his *righteous vengeance*. These three arguments he confirms by three similar instances of God's dealing recorded in their scriptures. The instance of Ishmael and Isaac relates to God's *veracity*, in fulfilling his promise to the children of the promise. The instance of Esau and Jacob relates to God's *sovereign right* of dispensing his special favours to nations and bodies of men, whether Edomites or Israelites, Jews or Gentiles, according to his good pleasure. And the instance of Pharaoh relates to God's *righteous dealing* in deserting hardened sinners, and making them examples of his *vengeance*.

Such is an outline of the argument pursued in the passage now before us; and the more

closely we view it in connexion with the whole scope of St. Paul's argument in this and the two following chapters, the more clearly shall we perceive that the question which is here discussed, relative to predestination and election, is totally different from that which has been debated by Christians since the time of Augustine. The modern controversy has not any resemblance whatever to the Jewish notions, and cannot be applied to them. For, in the first place, the Jews extended the promises of God to their *whole* nation, to *every* Jew as a descendant from Abraham; and, in the next place, they restricted those promises to *their nation only*.² Now it is these two errors which the apostle here confutes, shewing, on the one hand, that God's promises were only made to the faithful descendants of Abraham; and, on the other hand, that God is equally the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. The first covenant was broken by their *common* father, Adam; and the promises of forgiveness are made to all believers, whether among Jews or Gentiles, through the *common* Mediator, the head of the new covenant, Christ Jesus.

1. St. Paul had represented himself as *having great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart*, on account of his *brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh*. But, as he now seems to argue, though I have expressed this tender concern for the Jews,

² *Omnes, et soli, nos sumus populus Dei.* Bengel in loc.

whom God has indeed rejected as a nation, it must not be supposed that his word has failed of its accomplishment. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger: as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*⁴

Now it is evident that St. Paul here takes occasion, from the promise made unto their fathers, to reason with his countrymen somewhat to the following effect.⁵ If you will only attend to all the circumstances of the covenant, and consider in what way it was originally founded, you of all people will have the least reason to complain. For you should consider that it was originally founded in the mere good pleasure, and according to the sovereign disposal of Almighty God. The pro-

⁴ Ver. 6—13.

⁵ Dean Tucker's Sermons.

mise was first made to Abraham freely, that his posterity should be the chosen and peculiar people of God, and that they should enjoy the land of Canaan for their possession. It was Abraham's wish that these privileges should be fixed in the line of Ishmael; ⁶ but God denied his request, and gave them to his son Isaac. Again, you have another remarkable instance of the sovereign will and pleasure of Almighty God, in bestowing such national privileges, exhibited in the case of Esau and Jacob. These two children were both the descendants of Abraham, of Sarah, and of Isaac, persons to whom the promise had been expressly limited. Rebecca was the mother of them both; and consequently there could be no preference in that respect. The infants, moreover, being yet unborn, *had not done any good or evil*; and yet the Lord said to Rebecca, "two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger."⁷ Thus was the posterity of Jacob, though the younger branch, *loved* and preferred, and that of Esau, *hated*, i.e. according to the Hebrew idiom, *slighted in comparison of the former*; *not equally favoured and advanced*.

The words of the thirteenth verse do indeed abundantly prove, brethren, that God acts with a

⁶ Gen. xvii. 18—21.

⁷ Gen. xxv. 23.

sovereign and an unaccountable freedom in the dispensation of his favours. But it is equally certain that the apostle does not here speak of the eternal state of Jacob and Esau. Both the prophecies here referred to, plainly point to their *posterity*.⁸ And when Jehovah speaks, by the mouth of the prophet Malachi, of “laying waste the heritage of the Edomites for the dragons of the wilderness,” “this,” says the candid and pious Doddridge, “is so different a thing from his appointing the *person* of Esau to eternal misery, by a mere act of sovereignty, without regard to any thing done, or to be done, by him to deserve it, that I will rather submit to any censure from my fellow-servants, than deal so freely with my Maker as to conclude the *one* from the *other*.”⁹

2. *What shall we say then?* ¹ continues St. Paul, (desiring to inculcate, still more emphatically, God’s sovereignty in dispensing his special favours to nations and bodies of men, according to his good pleasure,) *Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* In drawing the above conclusion, the apostle seems to say; So then, as to the great point of national privileges,

⁸ Gen. xxv. 21—23; Mal. i. 2, 3.

⁹ Family Expositor in loc.

¹ Ver. 14—16.

the sum is this : it is not of him that *willeth*, because Abraham willed for Ishmael, and Isaac willed for Esau ; neither is it of him that *runneth*, or by the greatest zeal which we can employ in such courses as may seem best to our own wisdom ; but it is *of God that sheweth mercy*. These are acts of mere favour and bounty, which none can challenge or have a right to expect ; and, consequently, none can complain of injustice when the preference is given to others.¹

3. And, as the apostle seems to say, this subject of the divine sovereignty may be yet farther illustrated by the righteous vengeance which God executed upon Pharaoh. *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*² Pharaoh had justly deserved, indeed, to be made an example of divine vengeance, long before it was so visibly executed upon him. But yet *the scripture saith unto him, For this same purpose have I raised thee up,*³ or, *made thee to stand,*⁴ preserving thee, suspending to punish thee, when I sent all my other plagues, in order *that I might shew my power more illustriously in thee, and that my name might thereby be declared throughout all the*

¹ Dean Tucker.² Ver. 17, 18.³ Ex. ix. 16.⁴ See Bengel and Parkhurst on the verb *וַיַּעַמ* as used in Ex. ix. 16.

earth. And, as St. Paul argues with his brethren, thus it is as to your rejection. God might justly have deprived your nation of those privileges of which you were so unworthy, long before you had committed the last and finishing acts of impiety, in crucifying the Lord of glory, and in despising the subsequent offers of his pardon and forgiveness through the Gospel. But, in order to make your disobedience a lesson of more solemn admonition to the world at large, he continued your state and nation in being; that so your rejection, and the calling of the Gentiles, might appear to all the world to be the immediate effect of his overruling providence. Thus *hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*: in other words; whom he will, he permits so to abuse his forbearance towards them, that they persist obdurate in their provocation of him, and thus “bring on themselves swift destruction.”⁶

My Christian brethren, let us lay to heart the affecting representation of the divine sovereignty which is now before us, considering within ourselves how certain it is, whether we look to nations or individuals, that unless God shall soften the rebellious heart of man, and incline it to a sweet obedience, all the means which he outwardly employs, however good and holy in themselves, will only be perverted by man to complete his own state of hardened and hopeless impenitence. Let

⁶ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

us remember also how truly it has been said, that Satan hardens as a malicious author; that man hardens himself as a voluntary agent; and that God hardens as a most righteous judge and avenger, delivering up every obstinate and impenitent sinner to the most awful of all judgments, the hardness of his own heart! And, remembering this, let us adopt the language of our own Liturgy, and pray to that “good Lord,” who was manifested to destroy all the works of the devil, beseeching him to “deliver us from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandment,” and “finally to beat down Satan under our feet!”⁷

SECTION XXX.

CHAP. ix. ver. 19—33.

THE APOSTLE ANSWERS OBJECTIONS; REFERS TO THE PROPHECIC SCRIPTURES; AND SHEWS WHY SO FEW JEWS EMBRACED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

The view which I endeavoured to give you in the last section, of the general line of argument pursued by the apostle, is abundantly confirmed by that concluding portion of the ninth chapter,

⁷ Litany.

which is to form the subject of the present section, and in which our apostle speaks more expressly of the calling of the Gentiles, and of the rejection of the Jews.

St. Paul had just been adducing the instance of Pharaoh, to illustrate the righteousness of God in *hardening* impenitent offenders; or in delivering them up to the most awful of all judgments, the hardness of their own hearts. And to this instance of God's method of proceeding with his rebellious creatures, St. Paul now anticipates the following objection. *Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*¹ This presumptuous cavil is evidently intended to refer to the *secret* decrees of the Most High. "*Who,*" says the unhumbled opponent, "*hath resisted* his sovereign *will* and appointment? For even they who most rebel against his precepts, fulfil his *secret decrees*. His *will*, therefore, is universally done, and no creature makes any opposition to it."

Now the apostle might at once have replied, that the wicked are punished for resisting, not the *secret*, but the *known* and *manifest will* of God. He might have replied, that the wicked are punished for despising that *will* of God which is so plainly revealed in his word and works. But leaving that to be concluded from the other part of his argument, St. Paul indignantly repels

¹ Ver. 19.

the daring and impious question of his adversaries, by referring to the language of their own prophetic scriptures. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? As you will find it expressed in your own scriptures, shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*² This instance of the potter is evidently adduced by St. Paul as illustrating the justice of God's dealing both with Jews and Gentiles, at the season of the publication of the Gospel; and as serving to vindicate still more effectually his *severity* upon the impenitent Jews, and his *goodness* towards the believing Gentiles. The image is employed, you will find, both by Isaiah and Jeremiah,³ but it is enlarged upon considerably by the latter; and if you refer to the eighteenth chapter of the book of his prophecies, you will at once perceive, that what the apostle calls *making of the same lump one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour*, relates to God's dealings with a *nation*, according to its use or abuse of his goodness. "O house of Israel," says Jehovah by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah, "cannot I do with you as this potter? Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant

² Ver. 20, 21.

³ Is. xxix. 16; xlv. 9; lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 1—10.

I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them: And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.”⁴

*This the apostle now proceeds to apply to the case of the Jews and Gentiles, saying, What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*⁵ The Jews, after despising *the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,*⁶ were now become *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, which came upon them to the full about ten or eleven years after the writing of this epistle. The Gentiles, on the other hand, by attending to God's call in the Gospel, and by submitting themselves to his mercy, were now become *vessels of mercy*, prepared by God unto everlasting glory. “Every attentive reader,” says Doddridge, “will, I doubt not,

⁴ Jer. xviii. 6—10.⁵ Ver. 22—24.⁶ Chap. ii. 4.

carefully observe the great difference of phrase in which they who are *vessels of wrath*, and they who are *vessels of mercy*, are here spoken of. It is said simply of the former, that they were *fitted to destruction*; while it is said of the latter, that God (*himself*) *prepared them unto glory*. A distinction of so great importance, that I heartily wish we may ever keep it in view, to guard against errors on the right hand or on the left." The contrast which is here so justly noticed, is indeed most strongly marked in the language of the original. For, according to the exact force of the term which St. Paul employs, *the vessels of wrath* are represented as having been *fitted, perfected, ripened by their own wickedness, for destruction*; ⁷ insomuch that, in one of our English versions, we find it said of the vessels of wrath, that they had been *working out their own destruction*. Observe, also, how emphatically it is here declared, that God *endured* WITH MUCH LONG-SUFFERING these *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*; words in which it is written, as with a sunbeam, that God never hardens, as a righteous judge and avenger, until man has chosen wilfully to harden his own heart, *despising the riches of the divine goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, and after his hardness and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath unto himself*.⁸ And observe, in the last

⁷ καταρτισμενα. See Jebb's "Sacred Literature."

⁸ Chap. ii. 4, 5.

place, that the phrases *fitted to destruction*, and *afore prepared unto glory*, are more than simply antithetical. *Preservation*, or *deliverance*, would have been a sufficient counterpoise for *destruction*; but, as St. Paul reminds us, the predispositions of God are infinitely bountiful. He not only *delivers*, but *he prepares for glory*!⁸

My brethren, as we dwell on the passage before us, let us consider, with adoring thankfulness and love, that God has, of his mere goodness, given to us, as Christians and as Protestants, those privileges which he hath withheld from so many nations under heaven; and that, if we improve them aright, we may indeed look upon ourselves as *vessels of mercy*, whom he is *preparing for eternal glory*. But, at the same time, let us consider, with self-abasement and holy fear, how the very expression, *vessels of mercy*, plainly implies that we too had deserved wrath; and how the term *prepared unto glory*, plainly shews that, in ourselves, we are and must be unprepared. Instead, therefore, of perplexing ourselves about those secrets of God's counsels, which it is impossible for us to penetrate, let us endeavour, rather, in humble dependence upon divine grace, to purify ourselves from every thing which may be displeasing in his sight, that so, in our several stations, we may be *vessels of honour*, fit for our Master's use; and let it be our continual prayer that, after having been permitted to

⁸ Jebb, ut supra.

set forth his glory, we may at length, through his mercy, be acknowledged as his in that glorious day⁹ when he maketh up his jewels."¹

That the whole of his argument respecting the rejection of the nation of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, might seem the less incredible to the former, St. Paul now proceeds to remind them how all this had been exactly predicted by their own prophets.² *As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrhah.*³

Having supported his reasoning by the above reference to their own prophetic scriptures, the former of which, as found in Hosea, would seem to point to the Gentiles, and the latter, as found in

⁹ Mal. iii. 17.

¹ Doddridge.

² Hos. ii. 23, and i. 8—10. Is. x. 21—23, xxviii. 22, and i. 9.

³ Ver. 25—29.

Isaiah, to the remnant of believing Jews, St. Paul thus resumes the line of his argument. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written,⁴ Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*⁵

Reserving for the next Section a more full consideration of this ground of the Jews' miscarriage, viz. that they sought to be justified, *not by faith, but by the works of the law*; I will now add a word of affectionate admonition on the subject of the "corner-stone"⁶ referred to in the concluding verse. There are multitudes of imaginary believers, brethren, of whom it may be truly said that they lie round about this "corner-stone," but that they do not derive any support from it, any more than stones which lie loose in heaps near a foundation, without being joined to it. Let us always remember, therefore, that we cannot derive any benefit from Christ, unless we are *united* to him by a true and lively faith: let us remember that

⁴ Is. viii. 14, and xxviii. 16.

⁵ Ver. 30—33.

⁶ Is. xxviii. 16.

we cannot partake of his riches, unless we are entitled to them by *virtue of such union*. It is this close and vital union with Christ which is the grand and only spring of all spiritual consolation; and the faith by which believers are thus united to him, is a *divine work*. Yes, brethren, he who laid the “sure foundation” in Zion with his own hand, works likewise, with the same hand, that precious faith by which the believer’s heart is knit to the “corner-stone;” and therefore it is that, as it is here expressed, *he who believeth shall not be ASHAMED or CONFOUNDED*; or, as we find it expressed by Isaiah, *he that believeth shall not MAKE HASTE*.⁶

Let us pray, then, unto Him, “from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift,”⁷ beseeching him to give unto us the increase of this heavenly grace; that so, under the blessed influence of such a true and living faith, we may not be *in haste*, like those who are roaming from one refuge to another, without finding repose in any; but that we may learn to rest upon the merits and death of Christ, for the pardon of our sins and for everlasting salvation; with an abiding conviction of his truth, a sure dependence upon his promises, and a cordial belief that whosoever builds upon this “stone,” shall stand secure for time and for eternity! The prophet does not say, that he who believeth shall be exempt from anxieties, but that, upon this foundation he shall be secure,

⁶ Is. xlviii. 16, and 1 Pet. ii. 6—8.

⁷ James i. 17.

and that, be those anxieties what they may, he shall not, by seeking *in haste* for any other resource, *stumble at that stumbling-stone* ! No, brethren, amidst all the trials which he may have to encounter, the believer will learn to say, with Peter, “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life ; ”⁸ or, with Job, “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”⁹ I know, says the true disciple of Christ, that every other dependence will fail, and that every other hope will end in shame and confusion : I know that, in the hour of death, the soul, which has no reliance upon the Son of God, will *make haste* to possess itself of any shelter from the terrors of his wrath ; and I know that, in the day of judgment, those who have no interest in a Saviour will be ready to “ call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall on them : ”¹ but my hope will never deceive me : for I am fixed upon the rock of ages, and the end of my faith will be the salvation of my soul !²

⁸ John vi. 68.⁹ Job xiii. 15.¹ Rev. vi, 16.² Dr. Dealtry's Sermons.

SECTION XXXI.

CHAPTER X. ver. 1—13.

CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO
EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

Our apostle has told us that the *Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but that Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.* He has also reminded us that the ground of the Jews' miscarriage was that they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for, (as it had been declared in their own prophetic scriptures,) *they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.* Feeling the supreme importance of this subject, St. Paul suspends, for a while, the direct prosecution of his argument respecting the conversion of the Gentiles, in order that he may affectionately urge upon his countrymen the *only way of justification for fallen man!* Brethren, says the apostle, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but*

*not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*¹

Pursuing the subject of the Jews' miscarriage our apostle here tells us that they, *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* And there is a peculiar emphasis in the language which he here employs. For the expression of *establishing their own righteousness, or making it to stand,*² seems to refer to the case of a person who allows that his house is out of repair, and in some danger of falling, but who will not be convinced that it requires a new foundation. He endeavours, therefore, by props and buttresses, and various repairs, to *make the house stand*, but all his expense and labour are thrown away; and, if he persists in his vain endeavours, it will be likely to fall down, and bury him in its ruins. Thus it was with the Jews, brethren, and thus it is with multitudes of professed Christians in every age. When convinced of defects in their moral righteousness, they endeavour to repair those defects by some superstitious observances of their own, entertaining, at the same time, some indistinct notion of

¹ Ver. 1—4.

² *στησαι*. Vide Scott in loc.

Christ's making up the rest. But they will not be persuaded that they are building on a false foundation; nay, they are offended at the humbling doctrines of free grace, and they actually make that precious foundation for our hope, which God himself has laid, and on which whosoever trusts shall never be *ashamed, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence!*

But, as our apostle says, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;* and as we dwell on the language of this and the preceding verse, we shall plainly discern the difference between a true and a false zeal; between a zeal which is, and a zeal which is not, according to knowledge. The man who, *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own righteousness, has not submitted himself to the righteousness of God,* has a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. He is ignorant of the deep corruption of his own nature, and of his own utter inability to obey God's blessed will; and he knows not, therefore, that he needs the blood of Jesus to wash away his guilt, or that he needs his Holy Spirit to enable him to *abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good.*³ But the man who feels that it is not in himself, but in Christ Jesus, that he is to be accepted with his God; the man who is looking to Jesus as *the end of the law for righteousness;* the man who is

³ Chap. xii. 9

looking to Jesus as the accomplishment and the truth of the promises; as the substance of all the types and figures of the law; as the victim which was foreshadowed by all the sacrifices; and as the fountain of that grace which enables us to run the way of the divine commandments; this man has a *zeal of God, which is according to knowledge*, and which warms his heart with a flame of holy love, which “many waters cannot quench!”⁴ I have thus taken occasion, brethren, to speak of the marks by which we may distinguish between a true and a false *zeal*, because I know how apt we are to fall from one extreme to another; and because it has been said, with truth, that if the Jews erred in having a *zeal without knowledge*, Christians are too often found to err in having *knowledge without zeal*.

We shall now find that the declaration contained in the fourth verse, viz. that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, forms the ground-work of the remaining part of the present Section, which seems to divide itself into these two propositions; viz. that Christ is the end, the fulfilment, and the perfection of the law for justification; and that this benefit extends to all believers, Gentiles no less than Jews.

The former of these two propositions, viz. that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*, is

⁴ Sol. Song viii. 7.

thus confirmed and illustrated in the fifth and five following verses. *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*⁷ In the above passage St. Paul seems to argue somewhat to the following effect. I have been declaring, in opposition to all who attempt to establish their own righteousness, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. And if you object to this, and adduce the difference between moral and ceremonial obedience, arguing that the former may help to justify a man, though the latter cannot, consider how *Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, that the man which DOETH those things shall live by them*, and then go on to ask yourselves whether you can claim eternal

⁷ Ver. 5—10.

Moses, as giving an additional emphasis to the passage, which he had been accommodating to the scope of his present argument.

Say not, then, O thou awakened sinner, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead ;) but know that the word of salvation is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Yes, brethren, confess with the mouth that Jesus is THE LORD, and you will no longer inquire, Who shall ascend up into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above ; for you know assuredly that the eternal Son of God once left those glorious mansions, to veil himself in our flesh, that, through his mysterious self-abasement, sinners might be pardoned and justified !³ Believe also in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, and you will no longer ask, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead ; for you will be continually rejoicing in the blessed persuasion that he who was delivered for

³ See Bishop Hopkins on the doctrine of the two Covenants.

*your offences, has been raised again for your justification!*⁴

Thus has our apostle established the former of the two propositions contained in the fourth verse, viz. that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*. The other proposition is, that this benefit of Christ extends to all believers, Gentiles no less than Jews; for, as the apostle adds, *he is the end of the law for righteousness, to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH*. And this he goes on to confirm, in the remaining three verses, by citations from Isaiah and Joel; *For the Scripture saith,*⁵ *whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference, he adds, between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For*⁶ *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Dwell, brethren, on the verses which I have just repeated to you, and say whether the whole of the apostle's argument, in this part of the epistle, should not always be viewed in connexion with the passage now before you, in which the universality of the offers of redemption is written in characters so plain that he may run who readeth them. You find this doctrine clearly stated in the eleventh verse. You find it repeated three several times in the twelfth and thirteenth verses. You find, moreover, that the universal term, *Whosoever*,

⁴ Chap. iv. 25.

⁵ Is. xxviii. 16.

⁶ Joel ii. 32.

⁷ Ver. 11—13.

which does not occur in Isaiah, is here introduced by the apostle, because he is speaking of him, the *same Lord over ALL*, who is *rich unto ALL that call upon him*. And, in the next section, you will find the same blessed doctrine so confirmed in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, as abundantly to prove, not only that *whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*, but also that God himself WILLETH that ALL should thus invoke his holy name.

And that you may be led, through divine grace, the more cordially and thankfully to embrace this important and consolatory truth, consider, I beseech you, in conclusion, what is that holy name on which all are invited to call. It is the *name of Jesus*; that name which conveys the promises of redemption to a guilty world; that name which is “above every name”⁷ to perishing sinners; “the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”⁸ For it is to the Lord Jesus that St. Paul applies the above words of the prophet Joel; words which are manifestly spoken of the true and only God. According to the original, the prophet declares that “whosoever calleth on the name of *Jehovah* shall be saved.” And when, therefore, we are taught, by St. Paul, to apply this language to *Christ*, must we not feel how meet it is that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in

⁷ Phil. ii. 9.

⁸ Acts iv. 12.

earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ? ”⁹

O that we may be made willing, “ in the day of his power,”¹ to receive into our hearts by faith, and to confess with our lips, and in our lives, this *Lord over ALL*, who himself graciously declares that he was “ lifted up to draw *all* men unto him,”² and whom our apostle describes as being *rich in mercy to ALL that call upon him* ! O that we may know, from our own blessed experience, the *riches* of the Saviour’s grace ; and may thus be enabled, under all our trials, to go on our way rejoicing ! Many indeed are the enemies of those who dedicate themselves to his service ; but *their* enemies are *his*, and the power which he now displays in behalf of his people, will not be laid aside, “ until all his enemies be made his footstool ! ”³ Great, also, is the strength of the lusts of our flesh, which war in our members ; but “ his grace is sufficient for us,”⁴ and mighty is the power of that Spirit by which he ruleth in us ! Heavy, moreover, are the afflictions which we are called to undergo for his sake ; but, “ if we suffer with him, we shall also *reign* with him ; ”⁵ and blessed be that dominion which makes us all kings, that HE may be for ever “ Lord of lords and King of kings.”⁶

⁹ Phil. ii. 10, 11, comp. Is. xlv. 23.

¹ Ps. cx. 3.

² John xii. 32.

³ Ps. cx. 1.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁶ 1 Tim. vi. 15, Rev. xvii. 14, and xix. 16

SECTION XXXII.

CHAP. X. VER. 14—21.

THE GOSPEL TO BE PREACHED TO ALL THE WORLD.

The passage which formed the subject of the last section, closed with quotations from Isaiah and Joel, in support of the declaration contained in the fourth verse, viz. that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. But because the Jews were very greatly offended at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and were, as we may collect from other parts of the New Testament,¹ in a more peculiar manner exasperated against St. Paul on that account, he takes occasion, from the last recited text of Scripture; viz. *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*, to vindicate the divine commission of himself, and the rest of the apostles, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

His vindication rests, in the first place, on the necessity of the case. For if, as the prophets signified before hand, it was God's good pleasure to grant repentance unto life to the Gentiles, then must it clearly have been his intention that the

¹ See Acts xxii. 21, 22; and 1 Thess. ii. 16.

offer of salvation should be properly made to them. *How then, as the apostle goes on to argue, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*²

This is one of the grounds on which his vindication rests; viz. the necessity of the case. The other ground is, the wonderful success which attended the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, plainly shewing that God's assistance went along with the apostles in the work. For, continuing his series of questions, the apostle thus proceeds; *And how shall they preach, except they be SENT? As it is written,*³ *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*⁴

This expression of the FEET of the messengers upon the mountains is found both in Nahum and in Isaiah; and there would seem to be a peculiar beauty in the figure which is here employed. Were it merely said, how beautiful are the messengers of the gospel of peace, the ideas excited would be such only as are consequent on their actual arrival; but when it is said, *how beautiful are the FEET of the messengers*, we seem immediately to think of their progress towards us; we admire them yet afar off; our imagination kindles at the prospect of good things to come; and our feeling partakes

² Ver. 14.³ Is lii. 7; Nah. i. 15,⁴ Ver. 15.

of that faith which is the “substance⁶ of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”⁶

Thus does our apostle invite his countrymen to consider the highly animated language of their own prophets on this most important subject; and surely, brethren, there is something very affecting in the manner in which he endeavours, in the whole of this chapter, to remove the envy and the jealousy with which the Jews regarded the calling of the Gentiles. As he says in his epistle to the Corinthians, he does not seek to have “*dominion* over their faith,”⁷ but he calmly and powerfully reasons with them out of their own Scriptures, that so, if possible, he might prevail upon them to cast away their prejudices, and to receive the Gentile converts as brethren.

I would only add, with regard to the series of questions contained in these verses, that an inspired apostle here clearly inculcates this solemn truth; viz. that a church which acknowledges Christ for its head, and in which “the pure word of God is preached,” is the authorized guide of faith and worship; and that they only who are “lawfully called and sent” as ministers into the Lord’s vineyard, are empowered to teach others in whom they are to *believe*, and how they are to *call* on him, who is the proper object of faith and adoration.⁸ But *beautiful* indeed are the *feet of them* who are

⁶ Heb. xi. 1.

⁶ See Jebb’s “Sacred Literature.”

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 24.

⁸ Art xix. and xxiii.

thus sent to preach the gospel of peace! "For the preaching of the word" says one, "is like the oil; and faith is like the lamp: and as the lamp without oil goeth out, even so faith without preaching may be turned into darkness!"⁹

We may now suppose the Jew to object that the success of the preaching of the gospel had not been universal, either among Jews or Gentiles; and that, in particular, among the body of the Jewish people, there were many who *did not believe*.¹ "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel;*"² as the adversary seems to say, "and may not this be regarded as some disparagement to a divine commission?" St. Paul replies that this general rejection of the message of salvation, and, more especially, this strange and almost universal incredulity of the Jewish nation, had been plainly foretold by Isaiah, and that therefore this want of success could not be any reasonable objection to the divine commission of the apostles; *for Esaias saith,*³ *Lord, who hath believed our report? So then,* continues the apostle, drawing from the very complaint of the prophet a powerful conclusion in support of his present line of argument, *faith cometh by HEARING, and hearing by the word of God.*⁴ The message had been delivered by the ambassadors of the Most High; but their *report* had not been *believed* by all, or the word preached

⁹ Wilson in loc.¹ Chap. iii. 3.² Ver. 16.³ Isa. liii. 1.⁴ Ver. 17.

had not been of use to all, "not having been mixed with faith in many that heard it."⁴

There was, brethren, in the days of the apostles, as there has been in all succeeding ages, an awful mass of incredulity. But how great soever this mass might be, it was to be attributed altogether to the perverseness and malignity of the hearers, and by no means to any want of diligence in the teachers, who had indeed most zealously fulfilled their commission. And this is what the apostle seems to urge in the eighteenth verse: *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*⁵

The apostle here applies the language of David in the nineteenth Psalm, concerning that universal teaching, by which "the heavens declare the glory of God,"⁶ to the preaching of the apostles. And if the former part of this divine hymn were always viewed by us as thus tending to raise our thoughts from the luminaries of heaven to the "sun of righteousness;"⁷ if, by adopting this twofold interpretation of the Psalmist's language, we considered the heavens as *declaring* that *their* lord is the representative of *ours*, and that the bright ruler in the natural, is the representative of the more glorious one in the spiritual world, we should then discover a peculiar emphasis in the

⁴ Heb. iv. 2.

⁵ Ver. 18. See Ps. xix. 4.

⁶ Ps. xix. 1.

⁷ Mal. iv. 2.

latter portion of the same divine hymn. We should then regard it as describing the nature and effects of the doctrine to be taught by those heralds of salvation, who should publish *its sound in all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world.* We should then regard it as an encomium upon the gospel, written with all the simplicity peculiar to the sacred language, and in a strain far surpassing the utmost efforts of human eloquence.⁸ I may here mention, also, that the early Christians always regarded this divine hymn in the above light, viz. as beautifully illustrating, in the first place, by the motion of the heavenly bodies, the unwearied labours of the heralds of salvation in spreading the truth from pole to pole; and as following up this illustration by a description of the character and effects of that blessed doctrine, which is to be “preached to every creature under heaven.”⁹ And hence it is that our church has appointed it to be introduced into the services for Christmas-day.

With the view of still endeavouring, if possible, to reconcile his *kinsmen according to the flesh*, to the belief of these things, St. Paul adds yet two more passages, to shew how distinctly the general reception of the gospel by the Gentiles, and its general rejection by the Jews, had been foretold by their own prophets. *But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith,*¹⁰ *I will provoke you to*

⁸ Bishop Horne in loc.⁹ Col. i. 23.¹⁰ Deut. xxxii. 21.

*jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*¹ But *Esaias* is very bold, and saith, *I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*²

St. Paul here seems to appeal to the Jews, saying, can you plead that no intimations had previously been given to you, that God intended to reject your nation for their unbelief and disobedience, and to take others in their stead? Remember how, in that prophetic song which all the people were commanded to learn throughout their generations,³ Moses represents Jehovah as declaring, that he would excite them to jealousy by those who had been *no people* to him, and that he would raise their indignation by his favours shewn to those who had been despised as *foolish*, because idolatrous. Remember, also, how *Isaiah*, in very bold language, which must have given great offence to his contemporaries, introduces Jehovah declaring that he was *found* as a Saviour, and acceptably worshipped, by those who had not so much as *sought* for him; and that he had freely bestowed his favour on those who had not previously made any *inquiries* after him. But with respect to Israel, he declared that he had

¹ Is. lxxv. 1, 2.

² Ver. 19—21.

³ See Deut. xxxi. 19.

stretched out his hands, full of blessings, and with most earnest and affectionate invitations, to a *disobedient and gainsaying people*.⁴

My brethren, what a picture is here presented to us of the manner in which the goodness of God is still striving to be too strong for the obstinate wickedness of man! And how striking is this commentary upon the affecting expostulation of the apostle in the second chapter, *despisest thou the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance!*⁵ Such is the representation, which is given to us in every part of scripture, respecting the loving kindness and the tender mercies of him, with whom we have to do. And, indeed, not content with repeating the assurances of his forbearance and long-suffering, he frequently condescends to confirm the same by an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"⁶ "These," says the good Latimer, "are most comfortable words; for now we may be sure, that when we will leave our sins and wickedness, and turn unto him, with all our hearts earnestly, then he will turn himself unto us, and will shew himself a loving Father. And to the

⁴ Scott in loc. ⁵ Chap. ii. 4. See also Sect. xvi., p. 137, 8, and 141.

⁶ Ez. xxxiii. 11.

intent that we should believe this, he sweareth an oath : we ought to believe God without an oath, yet he sweareth, to make us more sure.⁷

Such, I repeat, is the language both of the Old and New Testament, respecting the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God. But what is the language, even of the most solemn declarations, compared with the mysterious exhibition of the Son of God, bleeding, and languishing, and dying on the cross? May we not say of the crucified Jesus, that his *hands* are there continually *stretched forth*, in order that he may shed upon us every blessing; that he may protect us by his power; that he may shew us the path of life; and, in one word, that he may bring us to himself, as the “shepherd and bishop of our souls?”⁸ In faith and in prayer, let us look to him who was “lifted up from the earth, that he might draw all men unto him,”⁹ and let us choose this day which path we will pursue! Shall we, with the Jews of old, be still unbelieving in our hearts, disobedient in our lives, and gainsaying with our lips? Or shall we pray for grace to *believe the report* of his sufferings and death, considering how *faith cometh by* HEARING, *and hearing by the* WORD OF GOD?

⁷ Bishop Latimer's Sermons.

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

⁹ John xii 32.

SECTION XXXIII.

CHAP. XI. ver. 1—10.

THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS IS NOT TOTAL.

As the prophets of the Old Testament generally close their denunciations of wrath against the Jewish people with promises of brighter times of reconciliation and refreshment ; so St. Paul closes the mournful subject of their rejection, with a prophecy of their restoration and conversion. In the course of the present chapter, St. Paul shews that the Jews are not rejected from being God's people, either *totally*, or *for ever*. And while he thus seeks, on the one hand, to guard his brethren against despair, and to confirm the stability of God's promises ; he endeavours, on the other hand, to inculcate upon the Gentiles the importance of cultivating a spirit of tenderness towards their elder brethren, accompanied by a spirit of watchfulness and holy fear, lest they themselves also should be *cut off*. So that the drift of the chapter is twofold ; the *one* to keep the Jews from despair, the *other* to preserve the Gentiles from presumption and pride.

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people?*¹ thus the apostle enters upon his first proposition, viz. that the rejection of the Jews is not TOTAL; *God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin: i. e.* I Paul, am a Jew; not a proselyte of another nation, but a Jew by *birth*; and a Jew also of a distinguished tribe, even of the tribe of *Benjamin*, who was born, not of the handmaid of Jacob, but of Rachel his beloved wife. No, continues the apostle, *God hath not cast away HIS PEOPLE which he foreknew.*² Here, you observe, St. Paul repeats the expression of *his people* as being of itself a pledge, that they would not be universally or finally rejected. And not only does he repeat the expression of *his people*, but he adds, most emphatically, *his people which he FOREKNEW*; i. e. (as, taken in this connexion, the words would seem to import,) his *chosen and beloved people*; that people to whom he once said, by the mouth of the prophet Amos, “you only have I *known* of all the families of the earth;”³ that people of whom he had said, in such affecting language, by the mouth of his servant Moses, after having spoken of the judgments to come upon them, “and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them

¹ Ver. 1.² Ver. 2.³ Amos iii. 2.

utterly, and to break my covenant with them ; for *I am the Lord their God.*"⁴

Wot ye not, continues the apostle, *what the scripture*⁵ *saith of Elias ? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars ; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him ? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*⁶ Of the remnant in the days of Elijah, the apostle here observes, (repeating the language in which Jehovah then addressed his servant,) that they did not bow the knee to the image of Baal. And when the apostle adds, in the fifth verse, *even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace*, are we not powerfully reminded that this is the character of the children of God at all times, and under all circumstances, viz. that they do not bow the knee to any of the idols which the world bids us worship ? And must it not follow, therefore, that in whatever degree we love any thing otherwise than God's word doth allow, and in whatever degree we suffer any thing to usurp his place in our affections, in the same degree we shall lose the traces of that character which distinguishes all who belong to the remnant

⁴ Lev. xxvi. 44.

⁵ 1 kings xix. 10—18.

⁶ Ver. 2—5.

according to the election of grace? Let us observe, also, how it is solemnly declared, in the passage before us, that it is God who *reserves to himself* the remnant which he has chosen; and let us learn, therefore, how indispensable it is that we should look to him for grace to help us forward in the right path which leadeth to eternal life. For it is certain, brethren, that the tongue of men and angels cannot prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. It is only the "Father of spirits,"⁷ who hath an absolute command over our wills and affections, to work on them as he pleaseth, and to make all that is within us obey his blessed will. He appeals to us by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and this Divine Advocate knows no resistance. "He works sweetly, and yet strongly: yea, he can come into the heart, while all other speakers are forced to stand without!"

Having thus spoken of the *remnant according to the ELECTION OF GRACE*, the apostle, in the sixth verse, enlarges upon this subject, of which his heart was always full, and says, *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*⁹ Such is the brief but striking reflection on the nature and riches of divine grace, which the apostle pauses to make. And surely if every minister of Christ con-

⁷ Heb. xii. 9.⁸ Archbishop Leighton.⁹ Ver. 6.

sidered how important it is that Christians should never lose sight of this grand scriptural truth, viz, that it is wholly to divine grace, and not to any works of their own, that they are to ascribe their acceptance with God; they would be ready, after the example of the apostle, sometimes to turn, as it were, out of the way, to dwell a little upon a thought, at once so humbling and so reviving! ¹

When St. Paul here places *works* in opposition to *grace*, it is plain that he intends, not works simply considered, as the necessary fruit of a true and lively faith, but the *merit of works*, or *meritorious works*; of which it may indeed be affirmed, that *works*, as a title to justification, can be *no more works*, if they need in any measure the help of grace. This view of the apostle's language is admirably expressed in the following paraphrase of the devout Bishop Hall: "If they be elected out of God's free grace, then not out of any merit of their own works; otherwise grace should not be free, but earned, and so no grace at all. But if it be of the merit of works, then it is not of his free grace; for else work should not be work, and not meritorious at all: neither can there be any *mixture* of the merit of works and the free grace of God, but one of these excludes the other." ²

This, then, is the substance of the truth contained in the apostle's declaration; viz. that the *same* benefit cannot, at the *same time*, be derived from

¹ Doddridge in loc.

² Bishop Hall in loc.

both ; in other words, that *grace* and *works*, as *causes*, mutually destroy each other. “ Grace,” says Augustine, “ is not grace at all, unless it be altogether gratuitous.”³ And the more we consider the character of *grace* and *works*, the more we must see how utterly incompatible they are one with another. For *grace* gives a favour which is not due ; while *works*⁴ challenge a reward as a debt. The nature of *grace* is to be *free* ; but the nature of *works* is to make *indebted*. Hence it irresistibly follows, (and it is this conclusion which shews the importance of the subject before us,) that if *election* be merely of *grace*, corrupt flesh must cease to boast of the merit of *works*, and all the glory must be ascribed to him who has “ made bare his holy arm ”⁵ for man’s salvation !

Taking up the line of his argument again from the fifth verse, where he had said, that *even at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace*, the apostle thus proceeds ; *What then ? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for ; but the election hath obtained it,*

³ Gratia non est gratia ullo modo, nisi sit gratuita omni modo.

⁴ Strictly speaking, indeed, *merit* in any *creature* is a paradox. For, in any supposable case, it is clear that, as between the *Creator* and his *creatures*, a *reward* must be altogether *free*. And if it must be said, therefore, even of the unfallen angels, that when they have done all, they are still *unprofitable servants*, how much more emphatically must this language apply to the fallen children of Adam !

⁵ Is. lii. 10.

and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written,⁶ God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith,⁷ Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they see not, and bow down their back alway.⁸ Behold, in this passage, an affecting representation of the general state of the Jewish nation. Though there was, at that time, a *remnant* of converted Jews, who, together with the believing Gentiles, had been chosen to be God's peculiar people, what was the state of the great body of that nation? It had happened to them according to the word of prophecy: they were hardened and blinded judicially, in consequence of their impenitence, and their obstinate rejection of all the means employed by God for their conversion.

I say *hardened and blinded* JUDICIALLY; for, as I observed in a former section,⁹ such is the obvious purport of all those passages in Scripture, which speak of the judgments of God upon the children of men; insomuch that no authority or example can be produced to prove that God did actually harden, or had a will to harden, any but those who had abused his patience, despised his

⁶ Is. xxix. 10; vi. 9; and Deut. xxix. 4.

⁷ Ps. lxxix. 22, 23.

⁸ Ver. 7—10.

⁹ Sect. xxix.; and see Jas. i. 13—18.

gracious invitations, and perversely chosen to "love darkness rather than light!"¹⁰ As it is so strongly expressed in the first chapter of this epistle, in all such cases God *gives them up* to follow the devices and desires of their own sinful hearts.¹ Yea, he *endures with much long-suffering these vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*;² and when they have obstinately *put away from themselves*³ all his mercies, and have *despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering*,⁴ then it is, and not till then, that he judicially abandons them to all the blindness and the hardness of a *reprobate mind*.

And O, my brethren, how awful is the condition of those who are visited with this judicial blindness of heart! How awful is the state of those whom God, as a just judge, has delivered up to Satan and to their own lusts, to be blinded more and more! To speak in the language of that psalm, to which the apostle here refers, "the very things that should have been for their wealth, are unto them an occasion of falling."⁵ Not only does their "*table*" become "a snare before them," but the very provision made for their souls, as well as their temporal plenty, is, in righteous judgment, made the occasion of their being more deeply *ensnared* in guilt, and of their sinking under more dreadful

¹⁰ John iii. 19. ¹ Chap. i. 24—32. ² Chap. ix. 22.

³ See Acts xiii. 46.

⁴ Chap. ii. 4.

⁵ Ps. lxi. 23.—*Prayer Book translation*.

condemnation, as the *recompence* of their unbelief! The light of the gospel still shines around them; but as they have loved “darkness rather than light,”⁶ and have chosen therefore to close their eyes against its beams, their *eyes* are now *darkened*, *that they cannot see*; their senses are locked up in a state of stupor;⁷ and their *backs* are *hewed down* continually under the yoke of sin and Satan!

SECTION XXXIV.

CHAP. XI. ver. 11—21.

THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS IS NOT FINAL.

As I mentioned in the last section, St. Paul shews, in this chapter, that the Jews are not rejected from being God’s people, either *totally* or *for ever*. The former of these two propositions is set forth in the first ten verses of the chapter; and we now enter upon the latter proposition, which is to form the subject of this and the following section;

⁶ John iii. 19.

⁷ The Greek word (*κατανυξις*) rendered *slumber* in the eighth verse, denotes the *deadly sleep* of a person stung by some poisonous creature.

viz. that God has not *finally* cast off his chosen and beloved people.

*I say, then, says the apostle, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*¹ Considering, in this verse, the *end* of God's righteous dispensation, in his present rejection of the Jews, St. Paul inquires whether in these, his solemn judgments upon them, he designed their utter ruin and irremediable downfall? *God forbid*, answers the apostle; but all this is in order to the accomplishment of a scheme of the most wonderful and comprehensive goodness. *Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*

Here, then, are the two great ends which God graciously designed in the rejection of the Jews; viz. first, the salvation of the Gentiles, and secondly, the conversion of the Jews by their example. It is on these important topics that St. Paul continues to argue, until the end of the thirty-second verse; and the frequency with which he recurs to the latter of these two subjects, viz. the ultimate conversion of the Jews, serves continually to remind us of his touching declaration, at the beginning of the tenth chapter, viz. that his *heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was, that they might be saved!*²

¹ Ver. 11.

² Chap x. 1.

This spirit of deep and tender concern for his kinsmen according to the flesh, is plainly manifested in the twelfth and four following verses, in which he assigns the most prominent part to the subject of the future conversion of the Jews by the example of the Gentiles. *Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? (For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.) For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*³

You observe how, in the whole of this passage, St. Paul seems to point to the future conversion of the Jews, as one great end to be answered by the calling of the Gentiles; and the passage, therefore, amply illustrates the remark which I made at the commencement of the last section, viz, that one obvious drift of the apostle's argument, in the chapter before us, is to keep his countrymen from despair. The apostle's reasoning rests mainly on this consideration, viz. that *if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and that if the root be holy, so are the branches.* By the *firstfruit* and the *root*,

³ Ver. 12—16.

we are to understand the three great progenitors of the Jews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and more especially the first of them, who, being eminently holy and dear to God, would derive a blessing to his posterity on that account ; so that a measure of *relative* sanctity should attach to his posterity, notwithstanding their rebellions and visitations. For, as the *whole lump*, or mass of corn, under the law, was hallowed by the heave offering of the firstfruits dedicated to God ;⁴ and as the branches partake of the vigour of the root from which they spring ; even so the great body of the Jews are, in a *relative* sense, sanctified, or regarded as a holy people, by their descent from Abraham. “ And certainly,” says Bishop Hall, “ it must needs be granted, that there is a special privilege of *spiritual nobleness*, and, by reason of the covenant, an *hereditary kind of dedication to God*, in the nation of the Jews.”⁵ The apostle argues, therefore, that they cannot be *finally rejected* ; but that they shall, in God’s good time, be admitted to partake of all the privileges and benefits which belong to that sacred alliance.

Such is the striking argument of the apostle on the subject of the future conversion of the Jews ; and the language which he uses in the twelfth and fifteenth verses, shews how his heart glowed within him as he dwelt upon this glorious prospect. *If*

⁴ See Numb. xv. 20 ; and Lev. xxiii. 10,

⁵ Bishop Hall in loc.

the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? In other words, as long as they are excluded, the church of Christ has not that *full and complete life*, which it shall enjoy upon their restoration; when there shall be a happy union between all believers, and when one church shall be made up of both Jews and Gentiles!

In thus directing your attention to the scope of the apostle's argument, I have considered the fifteenth verse as being immediately connected with the twelfth. The two intermediate verses, the thirteenth and fourteenth, may be regarded as forming a parenthesis, in which the apostle seems to turn aside for a moment, from his main argument, in order that he may make a direct appeal to the Gentile converts, and thus endeavour the more effectually to awaken their attention to what he would have them regard as one great end of the gospel dispensation. And surely there is something very affecting in the consideration which is thus brought before us, viz. that the apostle actually seems to find a *reason* for his zeal to convert the Gentiles, in his *love to his own countrymen the Jews*. *I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office, and speak of your riches; not indeed with a view*

of making you proud and contemptuous, but if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

You have seen, brethren, how admirably the above passage is suited to keep the Jews from despair. And, in that part of the argument which remains to be considered in this and the following section, you will observe how the apostle endeavours, on the other hand, to warn the Gentiles against presumption and pride. *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree ; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well ; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear : for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

We may gather from these verses, as compared with the apostle's language in the fourteenth chapter, that though the great fault, which most disordered the church, and which principally exercised the apostle's care in this epistle, was on the part of the Jews, who were continually pressing the necessity of legal observances, not brooking that the Gentiles, though converts to Christianity, should be admitted into their communion, without

being circumcised; yet, at the same time, the convert Gentiles were not without fault on their side, in treating the Jews with disesteem and contempt. St. Paul here applies a remedy to this contemptuous and disdainful spirit on the part of the Gentile converts; and, in thus repressing the tendency, which existed among them, to undervalue and despise the Jews, he evidently pursues a course which was suited to conciliate still more effectually his *kinsmen according to the flesh*. *Boast not*, says the apostle, *against the branches*; the natural branches which are broken off. *But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee*. If you *boast* against these *branches*, you do in a manner *boast* against the *root* which bare them, even against Abraham himself, who may be called, most emphatically, the *root* of the olive-tree, because he is the parent from whom the Jews naturally descend, and because of the covenant which God made with him. Now consider that *thou bearest not the root, but the root thee*. The church of the Jews is the *mother church*; “salvation,”⁶ as our Lord declares, “is of the Jews;” and it follows, therefore, that the Gentiles are not called to make a distinct church by themselves, seeing that there is but one church, embracing all the children of God, whether under the elder or the later dispensation. You are called, therefore, to be members of this *one church*, and you should

⁶ John iv. 22.

ponder in your hearts those words of Christ himself; "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be *one fold, and one shepherd.*"⁷

And if the Gentile convert should still say, *The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in*; St. Paul answers, *Well, because of UNBELIEF they were broken off, and thou standest by FAITH.* I deny not that the natural branches have been *broken off*; and I admit also that God, in his unsearchable wisdom, employs this rejection of the Jews as a means to promote the grafting in of the Gentiles. But, consider within thyself that it was because of *their unbelief*, and not on account of thy worthiness, that *they were broken off*; even because they proudly *went about to establish their own righteousness.*⁸ And consider, on the other hand, that the Gentiles have been ingrafted into the body of the church, not for their own worthiness, but through that *faith* whereby they have rested in Christ alone for righteousness and salvation. Now *unbelief* is natural both to Jew and Gentile, for both are by nature "born in sin, and the children of wrath."⁹ But *faith* is the free gift of God, derived from his mercy alone, and from the hand of that mercy given to the Gentiles.

Be not highminded, therefore, but fear. For if

⁷ John x. 16.

⁸ Chap. x. 3.

⁹ Church Catechism.

God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. These words, when taken in this connexion, may be regarded as referring to the collective body of professed Christians, rather than to individual believers. But still every true believer will charge upon his soul this lesson of holy caution, *Be not highminded, but fear.* Yes, brethren, whatever our privileges, whatever our experience, whatever our persuasion may be, still let us dwell upon the apostle's words. Daily let us recollect what we were in our natural estate, and what, with all our improvements and attainments, we should immediately be, if God should forsake us. Daily let us recollect, moreover, that though the believer need not fear condemnation, yet he may and must fear transgression. Though he need not fear falling into perdition, yet he ought to fear falling into sin. In one word, the believer must have the fear of *humility*, to make him watchful; *not* the fear which arises out of *unbelief*, to fill him with despair.

SECTION XXXV.

CHAP. xi. ver. 22—32.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

When entering upon the consideration of this chapter, I observed to you that its scope is evidently twofold; viz. the one to keep the Jews from despair, and the other to preserve the Gentiles from presumption and pride. And this remark, which has derived confirmation from the portion of the chapter which we have already reviewed, will be yet further illustrated by the passage which forms the subject of the present section.

*Behold therefore,*¹ says the apostle, prosecuting that line of argument which was so well suited to beat down the pride of the Gentile converts, and to inculcate the importance of a charitable and humble spirit, *the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* The word² which is here rendered *severity*, denotes, in strictness of speech, *a cutting off*, in like manner as the gardener cuts off, with a pruning-knife, dead boughs or luxuriant

¹ Ver. 22.² αποτομία from τεμνω, seco.

stems; so that the apostle evidently refers to what he had been saying before with respect to the *breaking or cutting off*³ of the unbelieving Jews, from the parent *olive tree*. But if you attend to the structure of the verse, you will observe that, even while employing the language of solemn admonition, the apostle is desirous that we should dwell upon mercy, rather than upon judgment; for *behold*, says he, *the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness*; thus placing *goodness* at the beginning and the close of this summary of the divine dealings with the children of men. It is true indeed that he follows up this representation with a word of caution, saying, *IF THOU CONTINUE in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*. But this only serves to impress upon our hearts the awful truth that man is disposed to be his own destroyer. And we are thus plainly reminded that while, on the one hand, we cannot ever sufficiently adore the riches of God's *goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering*,⁴ we cannot, on the other hand, be too much on our guard against the incessant workings of that "evil heart of unbelief" which leads us to "depart from the living God."⁵

Having thus urged upon the Gentile converts the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, the apostle proceeds to shew that, how forlorn and despe-

³ See ver. 17—21.⁴ Chap. ii. 4.⁵ Heb. iii. 12.

rate soever the case of the Jews may seem to be, their conversion is not only a *possible*, but a very *probable* event. *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.*⁶ This shews the *possibility* of their conversion; and he now goes on to argue for the *probability* of such conversion, saying to the Gentile convert, *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*⁷

But not resting here, not content with describing the conversion of the Jews as *credible* and *probable*, St. Paul, in the remainder of the passage before us, speaks of it as that which shall surely be accomplished. To prove this he adduces, in the first place, what we may regard as his own solemn testimony, under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.*⁹ Mark the apostle's language. He does not say, *And then*, but *so all Israel shall be saved*; as if the removal of the blindness of the Jews were to be *simultaneous* with the abundant entrance

⁶ Ver. 23.⁷ Ver. 24.⁹ Ver. 25, 26.

of the Gentiles into the church of Christ. And I the rather ask you to notice this, because I feel, brethren, that we are apt to contend, with too much eagerness, for the order in which these things are to be accomplished. While some of us maintain that the conversion of the Jews is to precede, and others, that it is to follow, the *fulness of the Gentiles*, we are, in the mean time, apt to forget this grand, consolatory truth, in which we may assuredly rest, and in the reception of which all true believers will cordially agree, viz. that, be the order of these events what it may, the day is assuredly coming when “the Lord shall be King over all the earth;” and that, “in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.”¹ Instead, therefore, of presuming to speak too confidently as to the manner and the order in which this great *mystery* is to be accomplished, be it for us rather to pray for the coming of that time, foretold in scripture, when the arm of the Lord shall be put forth, in all its strength, to accomplish the number of his redeemed people, and to make, of Jews and Gentiles, one fold under one shepherd!

And this leads me to the consideration of the next proof which the apostle adduces in support of the future conversion of the Jews; viz. the testimony of the prophetic Scriptures. *As it is written,*² *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer,*

¹ Zech. xiv. 9, and see Mic. ii. 12, 13.

² Is. lix. 20, 21, Ps. xiv. 7, and liii. 6; Is. xxvii. 9.

*and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*³ 1. In one of the passages⁴ to which St. Paul here refers, the prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, says, “the Redeemer shall come *to Zion* ;” but the apostle, looking still further, even to those things which were to follow the coming of Christ, says, *There shall come out of SION the Deliverer*: that is, the Deliverer shall come out of the midst of his church, where he dwelleth and abideth by his Spirit, and shall effectually call the Jews. 2. Again, the prophet says, of this Deliverer, that he shall come “unto them that *turn from transgression in Jacob* ;” which words plainly imply *repentance*: but the apostle, rising higher still, even to that remission of sins, which issues in all the blessed fruits of true repentance, says, *He shall TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB*. 3. And *this*, as the apostle adds, still quoting the prophetic Scriptures, *is my covenant unto them, when the time arrives that I shall take away their sins*. Now, upon referring to the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, we find that the remainder of the twenty-first verse contains the substance of the *covenant* here referred to; viz. the promise of a new heart, and a new spirit. But the apostle here passes abruptly to the twenty-seventh chapter of the same prophet, and speaks, as in the preceding instances, of that which

³ Ver. 26, 27.⁴ Is. lix. 20, 21.

leads to every other blessing, viz. the removal of the guilt of sin.

There is a manifest reference, also, in the above verses, to the book of Psalms⁵ as well as to the book of the prophet Isaiah. And I notice this circumstance because, as I may here remind you, St. Paul had referred to the same books of the Old Testament in speaking of Israel's sins. In again referring to these books, therefore, when speaking of Israel's salvation, he seems emphatically to remind us that, from the very same scriptures which represent to us man's obstinate transgressions, we derive the blessed assurance that how much soever the dark tide of human iniquity may rage and swell, it shall never quench the light which beams from the mercy-seat of God, and which points to the *Deliverer who cometh out of Sion, to turn away iniquity from Jacob, and to take away the guilt and power of our sins!*

St. Paul goes on, in the next place, to prove the certainty of the conversion and restoration of the Jews, both from their *covenant relation* to God, and from the nature and condition of God's *gifts and calling*. *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*⁶ If God regard the Jews, according to their present state, *they are enemies for your sakes*, seeing that

⁵ Ps. xiv. 7, and liii. 6.

⁶ Ver. 28, 29.

they not only reject the gospel themselves, but are indignant at its being preached to you. But if he consider them, not after their evil deservings, but *as touching the election*, and according to the promise which he made to Abraham and his seed, *they are beloved for the fathers' sakes*; and God, therefore, in his own good time, will vouchsafe his grace unto them, because *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*. For though the Scriptures⁷ may represent God as *repenting* of his threatenings and judgments, and as being thus *better than his word*; yet he is never said to *repent* of his special gifts, or distinguished favours, promised to fallen man. There would seem, also, to be something worthy of remark, in the manner in which the *Jews* are here described as being ENEMIES *as concerning the gospel*, and BELOVED *as touching the election*. For the former expression has an *active*, the latter a *passive* signification. And St. Paul, therefore, appears thus to inculcate the great scriptural truth, that while the *evil* that we do, is to be attributed wholly to *ourselves*, the *good* that we receive, is to be attributed altogether to God.

The like contrast between *mercy*, as coming from God, and *unbelief*, as proceeding from ourselves, is observable in the three remaining verses, in which St. Paul adduces two other arguments, to prove the conversion and restoration of the Jews,

⁷ Scott in loc.

ascribing it, at the same time, wholly to the mercy of God, as the head-spring of all good gifts. One of these arguments is taken from the comparison of the case of the Gentiles with that of the Jews; *For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*⁸

The other argument is derived from the consideration of the one great end of that misery, in which both Jews and Gentiles are involved through unbelief; it being designed thereby, not that they should perish, but that they should minister occasion to God to shew forth the abundance of his mercy. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon them all.*⁹

In the former of these arguments, St. Paul reasons powerfully from the less to the greater, and says; if the *unbelief* of the Jews was an occasion of *mercy* to the Gentiles; much more shall the *mercy* shewn to the Gentiles be an occasion of *mercy* to the Jews. For, as he had argued in the earlier part of the chapter,¹ the Jews, being stirred up to *emulation* by the multitude of converted Gentiles, shall themselves also be brought to believe in Christ, and shall count it a shame to be outstripped by the Gentiles.

And all this, as he shews in his concluding argument, serves to illustrate the grace and mercy of

⁸ Ver. 30, 31.

⁹ Ver. 32.

¹ Ver. 11 and 14.

God, as manifested both to Jews and Gentiles; that so both of them may obtain salvation, not by their own works, but by the riches of his grace. *For God hath concluded them all, or, shut them all up together,*² *in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* God, as a just judge, hath suffered both Jews and Gentiles to remain, successively, in *unbelief*, shut up, as it were, in a prison; in order that, in his own time, he might fulfil the great counsel of his goodness, in shewing undeserved *mercy upon all*; that is, upon *all*³ believing persons in every nation.

In paraphrasing the last verse, I have said that God, as a just judge, hath suffered both Jews and Gentiles to remain *successively* under the power of their unbelief and disobedience; because it is evident that, in the words of the thirty-second verse, when viewed in connexion with the whole scope of his argument, St. Paul is referring to two different periods. In the early ages of the world, God suffered the Gentiles to revolt, and he took Abraham and his seed as a chosen people to himself. Afterwards, he permitted this nation to fall by unbelief and disobedience, and he took in the Gentiles on their believing, with an intent to make this very mercy to the Gentiles, the means of provoking the Jews to jealousy; that so they might be brought to the reception of the gospel, by that which had at first been an offence in the way to it.

² συνέκλεισε. See margin.

³ See Gal. iii. 27.

Now that the sin of the Jews should be the salvation of the Gentiles, and yet that the very mercy shewn to the latter should, notwithstanding the offence which it had occasioned, be, in its consequences, the salvation of the Jews; and that *all* should thus be *concluded in unbelief*, that so God might the more conspicuously *have mercy upon all*: all this was indeed a mystery in the divine government, well suited to call forth those expressions of holy admiration, with which, as we shall see in the next section, the apostle closes this solemn and important subject.⁴

But while we must admit that the words of the thirty-second verse are more immediately applicable to God's dealings with the Jews and Gentiles *nationally*, as exhibited in this and the two preceding chapters, it is evident, at the same time, that they contain a truth on which every one of us would do well continually to meditate; seeing that every child of Adam has to guard against that "evil heart of unbelief," which leads us to "depart from the living God."⁵ As professed Christians, we have all been grafted into the body of Christ's church; but, whatever may be our outward profession, we must remember how "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that *believe*."⁶ Let us ask ourselves, therefore, whether

⁴ Doddridge in loc.

⁵ Heb. iii. 12.

⁶ Gal. iii. 22.

we have yet exchanged an “evil heart of *unbelief*,” for that “*faith*” which is the “substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”⁷ Let us ask ourselves whether we can say that “the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.”⁸ And if we can, let us remember that *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that SHEWETH MERCY*.⁹ Let us lay these things to heart; and assuredly the conviction of the *mercy* which we ourselves have received, will lead us to look with tenderness on those, whoever they may be, and wherever they may be found, who are still *biding in unbelief*. The Jews were *broken off* because of that *unbelief* which is *common* to all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, until God has been pleased to recall us to himself. And if *we* stand, therefore, we *stand* only *by faith*, a grace which “cometh not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.”¹ Let us not be *highminded*, therefore, *but fear*; let us walk every day and every hour, in that spirit of holy fear and love, which will prove the reality of our faith; and while we feel, from our own daily experience, that it is only divine grace which “keeps us from falling,”² let us pray, in behalf of our elder brethren, to him who is *able to graff them in again*, beseeching him to make bare his holy arm, and through

⁷ Heb. xi. 1.⁸ Gal. ii. 20.⁹ Chap. ix. 16.¹ Eph. ii. 8.² Jude 24.

the same divine grace, to call them to himself ! Yea, beloved, let us go to that *Deliverer*, who *cometh out of Sion*, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob* ; and let us say to him, in the words of the devout Theodore Beza, “ O Lord Jesus, thou indeed justly avengest the contempt of thyself ; and that ungrateful people is worthy of thy severest judgments ! But O Lord, remember thy covenant, and pity them for thy name’s sake. And grant unto us, the most unworthy of all men, whom nevertheless thou hast distinguished by thy mercy, that making proficiency in thy grace, we may not be the instruments of thine anger against them ; but that rather, both by the knowledge of thy word, and by the example of a holy life, we may, through the power of thy Spirit, recall them into the right way ; that thou mayest be glorified for ever by all nations and people. Amen ! ”

SECTION XXXVI.

CHAP. xi. ver. 33—36.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD UNSEARCHABLE, AND HIS WAYS
PAST FINDING OUT.

That which first brought a present guilt, says South,¹ and entailed a future curse upon mankind, was an inordinate desire of knowledge. And from the fall of Adam to this very day, this fatal disease has stuck so close to our nature, that every one of his succeeding race is infinitely eager, inquisitive, and desirous, to know and judge, where he is called only to adore and to obey! It was this restless appetite of knowing, which made the earliest and the boldest encroachment upon the divine prerogative; setting up man, not only as a rebel, but also as a rival, to his Maker. For where, we may ask, was the real inducement to the breach of God's command? It was not, it could not have been, any pretence of the unreasonableness or difficulty of it; but it was merely *because it was a command*. It obliged, and therefore it was to be broken or shaken off. So that it was not so much the beauty of the forbidden tree, as the circum-

¹ See South's Sermons, vol. iv. Oxford edition, for the substance of this introductory part of the section.

stance of its *being forbidden*, which gave relish to the fruit, and force to the temptation. And could there be an higher and more direct defiance of the Almighty, under the peculiar character of the Lord and Governor of the universe, than to turn the very reason of his subject's obedience into an argument for his rebellion? Could there be more strange presumption, than that a short-sighted creature should pry into the decrees of heaven; and that one who was but dust as to his constitution, and of a days' standing at most, should aspire to an equality with his Creator in one of his divinest perfections?

The Scriptures, brethren, are in nothing more full and more frequent than in representing the infinite transcendency of God's ways and actings above all created understanding. "Such knowledge," says David, "is too wonderful for me."² "Thy judgments are a great deep."³ "God has put darkness under his feet."⁴ "His ways are in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known."⁵ And what, we ask, can be more emphatic than the representation which these passages convey? For he who treads upon the *waters*, leaves no impression; and he who walks in the *dark*, falls under no inspection. In a word, if we consult the reports either of scripture, or of our own experience, as to the dealings of God with man, and especially

² Ps. cxxxix. 6.³ Ps. xxxvi. 6.⁴ Ps. xviii. 9.⁵ Ps. lxxviii. 19.

as to his setting up one nation, and pulling down another, we shall find that our closest reasoning and our most exact inquiries must conclude in a silent submission to the overpowering truth of the exclamation of the apostle, in the passage now before us, *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

My brethren, is it not here expressly declared, respecting the *ways* of God, that they are *past finding out*? And if so, is it not the height of absurdity, as well as arrogance, to presume, either from divinity or philosophy, to assign any other reason of the works themselves, but the *sole will of the agent*? or to pretend to give an account of that which we ourselves own to be unaccountable? Common sense certainly must see and acknowledge the grossness of the contradiction, and must convince us, that, in things so transcendently above our highest speculations, the only rational and the only safe rule by which we can proceed, is to make them matter of *admiration* rather than of *argument*; ever remembering that, next to a direct violation of *God's revealed will*, is a bold *intrusion into his secret*!

It is in this humble, teachable, and reverential spirit, that we should always desire to contemplate the *judgments*, and the *ways* of God; and this is a truth which is powerfully inculcated in the four remaining verses of this chapter, in which the apostle, upon reviewing the wonderful and com-

licated scheme of divine goodness, for the redemption and happiness of all his rational creatures, both Jews and Gentiles, breaks out into the following rapturous exclamation: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For in him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*⁶

These words form the close of that long and luminous train of reasoning in which St. Paul has been vindicating the ways of God in the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. In the course of this argument, our apostle has powerfully combated all the carnal reasonings and perverse disputings of his *brethren according to the flesh*, assigning many satisfactory reasons for this remarkable dispensation, drawn from the general equity of the case; from the attributes of the Most High, and his relations to men; and from the congruity of this proceeding to the general tenor of God's providence, to his eternal purposes, and to his express declarations and promises. Such are the reasons which the apostle has adduced; and they are amply sufficient to clear and vindicate this dispensation from all the objections which had been,

⁶ Ver. 33—36.

or could be brought forward against it. Yet having said thus much, to answer the objections of his Jewish brethren, and to silence all the vain “disputers of this world,”⁷ the apostle now deems it right to close the whole argument with modestly intimating, that it was not for him to attempt to clear up the mysteries of the divine dispensations; but that, in all matters of this description, we must learn to acknowledge and adore the incomprehensible *wisdom and knowledge* of God, who frequently, in the course of his providence, acts upon grounds, and orders things in methods, wholly transcending our ability to discover or to trace. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! O the unfathomable depth of the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God*, in these wonderful dispensations of mercy and severity to the Jews and Gentiles successively! *O the depth of his wisdom and knowledge*, in making first the rejection of the Jews the means of calling the Gentiles, and in then working upon the obstinate Jews by his mercy shown to the Gentiles! *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Now, if by *judgments*, we here understand the decrees and determinations of God’s will, and by *ways*, the administration of his providence, in order to the execution of those decrees; the emphasis of the *first* part will be finely heightened by the *second* part of the

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 20.

latter clause. *How unsearchable are his judgments!* i. e. how utterly unsearchable must be the reasons of his decrees; seeing that even the ways of his providence, or, as Bishop Hall^a expresses it, "*the passages of his executions*" are *past finding out!*

For who, as the apostle goes on to ask, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, *hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*⁹ Dwell, brethren, upon the full and solemn emphasis of this question; a question which is repeated, in substance, in every part of scripture, and then consider how presumptuous it must be to speak, as some dare to speak, not only of the mysterious dispensation before us, but of that which is the greatest of all mysteries, viz. the *origin of evil*, as if they had actually "*stood in the secret of the Lord,*"¹ and had been his *counsellors*; nay, as if they would "*teach him in the path of judgment,*" and "*shew to him the way of understanding!*"² The language of scripture is, "*the Lord hath decreed;*" "*the Lord hath spoken;*" "*the Lord hath brought to pass.*" But the grounds and reasons of his dispensations, and even the very methods of his dealings with us, are above all human comprehension. It is plainly declared to us, for instance, in this chapter, that *blindness in*

^a Bishop Hall in loc.

⁹ Is. xl. 13; and see Jer. xxiii. 18; and Job. xxvi. 14.

¹ Jer. xxiii. 18, marginal reading.

² Is. xl. 14.

part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. But the apostle tells us at the same time, that he is speaking of a *mystery*; and were we to look only to this one instance of the *ways* of God with man, surely we must feel with St. Paul, that they are *past finding out*! How much more, then, when we contemplate all those other mysteries which are spoken of in the Scriptures, and with regard to which those Scriptures say to all true believers, “Why God doeth these things, ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter.”³

Yes, brethren, there is a day coming when those who are content now to “know in part,” shall “know even as also they are known.”⁴ There is a day coming when the deep wisdom, the exact justice, and the perfect goodness of God will be fully and gloriously displayed; when God's honour will be thoroughly vindicated; and when those who have despised his patience, and abused his grace, will call upon the “mountains and rocks to fall upon them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”⁵ Let us “judge nothing therefore before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”⁶ So much of God's *ways* as Christ has revealed to us, we may, nay, we ought to learn;

³ See John xiii. 7.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁵ Rev. vi. 16,

⁶ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

but “we may not be learners where God does not vouchsafe to be our teacher; nor must we have ears to hear, when God does not see fit to speak.”⁷ According to the remark of Tertullian, noticed in a former section,⁸ “*learned ignorance*” is much better and safer than proud and curious knowledge. And surely there cannot be a more awful and dangerous delusion than, instead of bestowing our pains on that which we may and ought to know, to weary ourselves in endeavouring to hunt out the things which, in our present state, are, and must be, *past finding out*!

Having thus considered the manner in which St. Paul here calls upon all believers to acknowledge, with humble and adoring hearts, that God’s *judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out*, I would now observe, in conclusion, how emphatically he reminds us, in the first place, that God is a *debtor to none*, but that all are beholden to him for all that they are, and all that they have; and secondly, that he is the *beginning and the end of all things*. *Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* 1. Who can pretend any claim of right to God’s undeserved favours; and to all the gracious effects of his free bounty? Let him only make out that claim, and if he can prove that he hath *first given to the Lord*,

⁷ Wilson in loc.⁸ Sect. xxiv.

it shall surely be recompensed to him again. 2. But vain above all vanity are such thoughts as these! For from his *creation* all things receive their being; by his *providence*, all things are upheld, governed, and preserved; and to his *glory* they all terminate! ⁹

When God says to each of us, in another part of Scripture, “My Son, give me *thine heart*,” ¹ he condescends to speak indeed as if men’s hearts were their own. But does it not follow, from the passage before us, that, in strictness of speech, we cannot give God any thing, but what he first *gave to us*? Yes, brethren, the believer feels and acknowledges that whatever is acceptable in God’s sight, is *his free gift*; seeing that he “worketh in us both to will and to do, *of his good pleasure*.” ² The believer knows, therefore, that his best works are no otherwise called *his*, than as our bread is termed *ours*, because it is GIVEN *to us*. “God,” says Augustine, “crowneth in us *his own gifts*, not *our merits*. He conferreth on us a double mercy; for he first giveth us *power* to do well, and then he recompenseth and crowneth that work which we did well by *his grace*. Look not, therefore,” says this holy father, in language such as every true believer will employ, as he draws near the throne of grace, “look not upon *my own works*; but upon *thy works*, O Lord, which thou hast done in me!”

⁹ T. Edwards on the Psalms.

¹ Prov. xxiii. 26.

² Phil. ii. 13.

SECTION XXXVII.

CHAP. XII. ver. 1, 2.

CHRISTIANS TO BE ENTIRELY CONSECRATED TO GOD.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*¹

The mere repetition of these words serves to remind us that the exhortation which they contain forms the practical application of certain truths which have immediately preceded. *I beseech you THEREFORE, brethren*, says the apostle, *by the mercies of God*. Upon these *mercies of God*, as displayed in the great scheme of our redemption, the apostle has been dwelling in the foregoing part of the epistle. He has spoken of the universal corruption of the human race; of the doctrine of justification by faith; of reconciliation with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; of the influence of divine grace; of the believer's privileges, infirmities, and triumphs; and of the divine sove-

¹ Ver. 1, 2.

reignty, as already illustrated in the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, and as hereafter to be still more gloriously exhibited in the conversion of the Jewish people. And having thus endeavoured to elevate the hearts and minds of the Roman converts to a devout meditation on Him, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, and to whom, therefore, glory is to be ascribed for ever*, St. Paul now commences his *application* of the foregoing truths; solemnly adjuring the Roman converts, as his *brethren* in Christ, by the *mercies* of God shewn to them in their calling and election into the church, that they study to adorn the gospel in their personal walk and conversation. And, that they might never be without some leading notion, which, like the polar star, should guide them in their passage to the eternal haven, he directs them to regard themselves as *offerings* dedicated to him who cannot look upon iniquity! *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Now does any one ask how the *body* can become a sacrifice? ¹ Let an ancient father of the church

¹ Throughout the whole of this section, I have availed myself

give the answer. "The *eye*," says Chrysostom, "is a sacrifice well pleasing to God, when it turns away from beholding vanity and wickedness. The *tongue* is an oblation to him, if unpolluted with corrupt communication. The *hand*, untainted with the touch of iniquity, is to him more precious than the savour of a holocaust." The whole man, in short, is a sacrifice, if every sense, and every power, and every energy is employed in the service of the Most High : if the feet run the way of God's commandments ; if the mouth be filled with the praises of God ; and if the ear be open to the accents of the wisdom which is from above. Every sacrifice, by its very nature, implies a dedication of the best of every creature to the honour of the Creator. He, therefore, that would present himself a *living sacrifice*, must be prepared to devote his best powers to the glory of his Maker and Redeemer. This is his bounden duty and service ; and it is a service in one respect eminently distinguished from all sanguinary offerings. In them, the act of worship was incomplete but by the slaughter of the victim. With us, on the contrary, who are called to offer a Christian sacrifice, it is perfected by the abolition of every thing within us that savours of death, and by the strength of every thing that pertaineth unto life. The earthly members

of three admirable sermons on the above passage, preached by the Rev. C. W. Le Bas, before the University of Cambridge, in November, A. D. 1825.

must indeed be mortified ; the deeds of the body must be consigned to destruction ; there must be fire from heaven to consume every principle of impurity, to expel every element at war with the commandment which is *holy, just, and good*.² But then, brethren, this is the very process by which we are prepared to be acceptably offered, as a *living sacrifice* unto God. Every sinful passion that reigns in our members, when thus mortified, is a blemish removed ; it is a step toward that life and perfection, which makes the offering worthy of the Deity. When we become dead to the vanities and lusts which revel in the unrenewed nature of man, then we begin spiritually to live ; then are we fit to be bound to the horns of the altar ; then is there a holy and vital flame in our bosoms which makes the sacrifice indeed a living one, and which rises toward heaven with a fragrance well pleasing to the Lord !³

Such, brethren, is the force of the illustration which the apostle employs in the first verse ; and let us only consider, for a moment, what the fashion of this world would be, if the principles which it enforces were in universal action. The whole cir-

² Chap. vii. 12.

³ In illustration of the expression of a *living sacrifice*, it may also be remarked that, in the ancient sacrifices, a beast which died of itself, or was torn by wild beasts, was considered unclean and unacceptable. But Christians are to be presented *living* to the Lord ; and their blood is to be spilt, as it were, at the foot of the altar. Diodati in loc.

cuit of society would then have the semblance of one consecrated enclosure. Every dwelling would be a temple, and every inhabitant a holy offering, presented continually to the divine acceptance, by the great high priest of the human race. A cloud of perpetual incense would go up toward the mercy seat; and, in return, the peace of God would descend to gladden and to sanctify the tabernacles of men! Well, indeed, may the apostle add, that thus to *present our bodies*, is our *reasonable service*; a service which assuredly becomes a rational being, who has learned the full extent of his obligations to the divine mercy in the redemption of man, and who knows, therefore, that he ought to present himself, his soul and body, to be a "reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God,"⁴ earnestly desiring not to be *conformed to this world*, but to be *transformed by the renewing of his mind*.

The real force of the original language which our apostle here employs, is worthy of our attention. Rendered quite literally, it implies a change which must be in daily and hourly progress to the end of our mortal existence. BE TRANSFORMING YOURSELVES,⁵ he says; or *let a transformation be ALWAYS GOING ON*. It is evident, then, that the change in question is not the work of a moment, or of an hour, or of a day. It is the work of a whole life; nay, of more than a life, since in this life it

⁴ Communion office.

⁵ μεταμορφεσθε. Vide Schleusner.

will never be complete. It is a change, however, which must be in daily progress to the end of our earthly pilgrimage; and then we may trust that its consummation will take place in heaven. In proportion as this blessed change advances here, in the same proportion shall we advance in discernment and in love. As the heart of stone gradually softens into a heart of flesh, we shall find its pulses become constantly more and more true to the cause of "goodness, and righteousness, and truth."⁶ Its movements will be in perpetual discord with the false principles of a depraved world; and in harmony only with the *good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

But, in order that you may have a more complete understanding, brethren, of the full scope of St. Paul's exhortation in the above clause, I will add another observation, as illustrative of the apostle's language. When St. Paul says, *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*, he evidently speaks as if this *transformation* were to be wrought by human energy and resolution. And, by using this mode of expression, therefore, he distinctly reminds us that though such a *transformation* is, in truth, a work which cannot be accomplished, except by the mysterious power of the eternal Spirit, we must yet co-operate with him in the work of renovation. Yes, brethren, we are solemnly called upon

⁶ Eph. v. 9.

ourselves to "work out" this part of our salvation with fear and trembling; but it is, at the same time, a delightful thought that it is "God which worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."⁷ It is an unspeakable comfort to learn, that God has not satisfied himself with telling us that, fallen as we are, we must effect our own restoration; and that, debased and disfigured as we are, we must, in our own unassisted strength, again put on his likeness, or else that our portion must be "everlasting destruction from his presence!"⁸ Blessed be God! the blood of his everlasting covenant speaketh better things than these to the penitent and contrite soul. It tells us, that our recovery is a thing treasured up, as it were, in the counsels of Jehovah; and that though the toil must be ours, the glory of our renovation must be his. It instructs us, that the Christian soldier must carry with him to his warfare a heart which stays itself, with simple reliance, on the might of the Lord of Hosts; and yet that he must grapple with his adversaries like one whose own right-hand is to win him the victory. Behold, then, the grand scriptural paradox, in which is locked up the secret of all acceptable obedience. Behold the golden rule, which is the guide of them, whose only desire is to "know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."⁹ Behold the way, in which, though the scorner may be lost, the simple

⁷ Phil. ii. 13, 13.⁸ 2 Thes. i. 9.⁹ John xvii. 3.

and single-hearted Christian shall go safely forward to the inheritance of the just. "Work out *your own* salvation with *fear and trembling*: for it is God which *worketh in you* both to will and to do, of *his good pleasure*!"¹

I would observe, lastly, that the apostle speaks of this *transformation*, as being necessary IN ORDER² TO *our proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*. And, in like manner, we find him saying to the Ephesians, "walk as children of light, *proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*."³ Now, surely, we cannot fail to remark, that the process here intimated, is just the reverse of that which would be taught us by any wisdom, but the wisdom of revelation. Surely any but a heaven-directed teacher would tell us, *first* to seek a profound acquaintance with the divine will, and *afterwards* to trust to the knowledge thus attained, for the restoration of the soul to its natural purity and grandeur. The apostle, on the contrary, declares that a renovation of the spirit, and a thorough change of heart, must commence, *before* we can successfully aspire to any real acquaintance with the will of God. A mighty change must be in progress, in all the powers and affections of the soul, and in the whole complexion of the life; or we shall never advance toward a clear and experimental perception of divine truth. The

¹ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

² εἰς τὸ δοκιμαζέιν.

³ Eph. v. 8 and 10.

heart must be deeply touched by the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, before the mind can discern and feel that the "law of the Lord is perfect;" yea, that it is fitted to "convert the soul, to enlighten the eyes, and to rejoice the heart."⁴

And does not all experience shew, brethren, that whatever may be the suggestions of mere human reason, this is indeed the order which must be followed by all who would really *prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God?* Does not all experience confirm the truth of the remark, that while "the truths of Christ crucified are the Christian's philosophy, a *holy life* is the *Christian's logic*; being that great introductory art, which must first guide the mind, in order that knowledge may break in upon it, like the sun shining in his full might, with such a victorious light, that nothing shall be able to resist it?"⁵

⁴ Ps. xix. 7, 8.

⁵ Dr. South.

SECTION XXXVIII.

CHAP. XII. ver. 3—8.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS AS MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

In the last section, I restricted myself to the first two verses of this chapter, in which our apostle, proceeding to enforce, in one continued exhortation, the practical obligations which result from considering the mercies of the gospel, calls upon Christians generally to *present themselves a living sacrifice unto God, and not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* Having thus laid the foundation of Christian obedience in a value for the *mercies of God* ; having established upon this basis the duty of devoting ourselves to God, and not to the world ; and having exhorted us to bring with us such a resolution as the *necessary preparation for knowing the divine will*, St. Paul goes on to give a brief sketch of the various duties of the Christian life, beginning with those which more immediately concern our relative stations in the *church*, or the *religious community*, of which we are members.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.¹

In this passage we behold one grand leading principle of the Christian faith; viz. that *we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*. This figure of the body and its members, which is frequently used in the apostolical epistles,² is here employed to illustrate chiefly the duties which belong to us as members of the church. The language of the apostle applied, in the first instance, to the use of spiritual gifts, and the administration of ecclesiastical functions, in the earliest days of Christianity; and we learn, from the passage before us, that, even in those times, when spiritual gifts were miraculously

¹ Ver. 3—8.² See 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv.; 1 Pet. iv.

bestowed upon the church, and in a measure since unknown, all gifts were not given to each person; but that the *gifts* of each differed according to the *grace* given to him. But the epistle was written for the edification of the Christian church in all ages; and, accordingly, we know that, in every age, there has been a distinction of offices, and a difference of qualifications, appointed by divine Providence, for the benefit of the church. The injunction, therefore, which St. Paul gave, as an apostle, to the church of Rome, is still most important, viz. that *no man among us think more highly of himself than he ought to think*; but that *he think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

It is evident, from the language of the apostle in the three following verses, that St. Paul is here addressing himself, more immediately, to those who are charged with the administration of ecclesiastical duties; reminding them that they are to be careful neither, on the one hand, to intrude themselves into those functions to which the providence of God has not called them, nor, on the other hand, to neglect those which belong to their office or station. But the apostle's language, in the whole of the passage now before us, may be

taken in a more extensive signification, as applicable to Christians at large; and I call upon all of you, therefore, to dwell on the representation which is here given of Christian humility, and on the manner in which it is here enforced, from the consideration that *we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

1. To speak, in the first place, of the real character of Christian humility. The spirit of lowliness which the apostle here inculcates, does not imply our ignorance of the gifts of grace which God may have bestowed upon us; for that were to make us both unthankful and unprofitable. He who does not know what God has freely given him, cannot return praise to God, or employ himself for God in his station.³ The apostle's caution plainly intimates that a sober, humble reflection on the *measure* which hath been given to each of us, is what God not only allows, but requires; and he himself illustrates his own meaning by declaring that he *speaks these things through the grace given to him.*

But while the Christian is not only allowed but required to be mindful of the gifts and graces which God has bestowed upon him, he must always remember that there are two qualifications which should accompany this knowledge. The one is, that he be content to take his *measure* much below, rather than incur the danger of going beyond, what he truly has. The other is, that he

³ Qui se nescit, nescit se uti.

be careful to regard whatever he has, not as his own, but God's. His ought to be the image and superscription upon it, and all the glory of it should be considered as his peculiar tribute. It is God, who *dispenses to every man the MEASURE of faith*; so that, as St. Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians,⁴ "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." When the apostle speaks, therefore, of *his own measure*, he does so, you observe, *through the GRACE GIVEN to him*. And such will be the language, such the persuasion, of every true believer. Viewing all his gifts and graces as having been freely *given*, he will feel that every new endowment should constrain him to be the more humble still, as rendering him the more deeply indebted to Him who is the only "Author and Giver of all good things."⁵ He will say, with David, "Who am I, that I should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee."⁶ And he will often put to himself the question of the apostle, as the sovereign preservative against the swelling poison of self-conceit, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"⁷

I will only add one more observation on the language of the third verse. If it be true that God hath *dealt or distributed to EVERY MAN the mea-*

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 7.

⁵ Collect for seventh Sunday after Trinity.

⁶ 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

⁷ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

sure of faith, must it not follow, brethren, that every man hath received *some* gift, and no man *all* gifts? This is a consideration which should keep the meanest from repining and discontent; since he that hath the lowest rank in most respects, should yet remember that he hath received something which is not only a good to himself, but which, rightly improved, may be so to others likewise. He should remember, also, that the approbation is bestowed not on him who *has much*, but on him who has been *faithful in little*.⁸ And the same consideration ought to curb the loftiness of the most highly privileged Christians; teaching them not only to see and acknowledge deficiencies in themselves, and to discover some gifts in far meaner persons, which they themselves want; but, besides the simple discovery of these gifts, to feel that they may derive benefit and advantage from them; that so they may be led not to trample upon all below them, but to take up and use things useful, though lying at their feet. In the beautiful language of Leighton, “Some flowers and herbs that grow very low, are of a very fragrant smell, and healthful use. And sometimes a very mean, unlettered Christian may speak more profitably and more comfortably, even to a well-instructed, learned man, than multitudes of his own best thoughts can do; especially in seasons of weakness and darkness.”⁹

⁸ Matt. xxv. 23; Luke xix. 17.

⁹ Archbishop Leighton on St. Peter.

2. Having thus dwelt, for a while, on the real character of Christian humility, I would ask you, in the next place, to consider the manner in which its exercise is here enforced from the consideration that *we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* As in the natural body there are many members, all united together, and each of them concerned in the well-being of the whole, but widely differing from each other in their several functions; even so it is in the mystical body of Christ. But in this consists the difference between them, viz. that the graces of the Holy Spirit, which are distributed among the several members of Christ's body, are not mechanical, but spontaneous and altogether free.¹ These, therefore, are distributed in such proportion as Christ's wisdom sees fit, for the common exigencies of the whole body. They are not procured by our merits, but are the overflowings of his goodness. What, therefore, remains for us but so to receive the talents with which we are entrusted, that we may improve them to the glory of God; the improvement of our own souls; and the benefit of all around us?

Turn now to the three remaining verses, in which St. Paul enlarges upon the comparison of *many members in one body*, shewing that, as in the natural body there are *many members*, having various faculties and operations, even so the mem-

¹ Dean Stanhope.

bers of Christ's body have various gifts corresponding with the various stations in which they are placed. *Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* The general purport of these three verses is to state, with more immediate reference to the discharge of ecclesiastical duties, the consequence which plainly results from the mutual relation among Christians, as members of one body, viz. that every man should well consider the talents with which God has entrusted him, and the post to which he has been called in the church; and that, without envying those who have more and are placed above him, or despising those who have less and are placed below him, he should make it his business, in dependence upon the divine blessing, to discharge his own office diligently and conscientiously, and to remain contentedly in that station to which it has pleased God to call him. Viewing these verses, therefore, in connexion with what has gone before, we may suppose the apostle to say, *Let every one of us demean himself with sobriety in the use of the gift bestowed upon him, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of*

faith, remembering that "every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that."² If any one, therefore, have the gift of *prophecy*, or of interpreting the scriptures, let him speak, *according to the proportion, or analogy*, of the Christian *faith*; that is, in entire consistency with that system of divine truth, which God hath made known to his church, by his prophets and apostles. If another be called to the *office of deacon*,³ (for such would seem to be the purport of the word here rendered *ministry*;) let him *wait on his ministering*; faithfully, diligently, and stedfastly attending to that good work. If another be called to *teach* young persons the first principles of Christianity, and to instruct them in the truth and will of God, let him give himself up to the duties of that station. If another be called to the higher functions of the pastoral office, that he may counsel, and *exhort*, or admonish his fellow Christians, let him give himself wholly to the fulfilment of that office. If another be called to the office of *distributing* the church's stock, let him labour to do it with *simplicity* and good fidelity. If another be called to fill the office of a *ruler* in the church, to ensure the good government of the flock, and to prevent scandals and offences; let him, who thus presideth over the discipline of the church, do it *with diligence*. And if another be called, in an especial sense and man-

² 1 Cor. vii. 7.³ διακονία.

ner, to *shew mercy*; that is, to have the particular care of the sick, aged, impotent, strangers, and orphans, let him do it with *cheerfulness* and alacrity of spirit.

It is evident, brethren, from the view which we have now been taking of the passage before us, that part of it relates, in the first instance, to the early ages of the Christian church, and that the whole of it bears, more immediately, upon the performance of those ecclesiastical duties which tend to the edification and instruction of the church; to the maintenance of its discipline; and to the supply of the temporal necessities of its poorer members. But, as I have before remarked, it is equally evident that the spirit of the whole passage is applicable to all classes of Christians, at all times, and in all ranks and conditions of life. It reminds all Christians that, as *members one of another*, they should endeavour to keep the unity “of the spirit in the bond of peace;”⁴ and it reminds them, also, that while they thus live together in unity and godly love, they should be careful, in all things, to give the glory to God, remembering that whatever good they think or do is *through the grace given unto them*, and that it is God who *dealeth to every man the measure of faith*.

Let this, then, be your aim, brethren, to have nothing in yourselves, or in any thing around you, but on this tenure; viz. that it be all to the glory

⁴ Eph. iv. 3.

of God. Let your estates, your families, your abilities, your whole selves, all that you have, and all that you are, be entirely consecrated to him. And be ye well assured that this *singleness of purpose* will always be in proportion to the degree in which the *love of God* grows and flourishes in your souls. Be ye well assured that “the *higher* the flame rises, the *purser* it will be.”⁵ Learn, therefore, to *love God* with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and you will then know what it is to *glorify God in all things*; yea, “whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do,” you will “do all to the glory of God.”⁶

SECTION XXXIX.

CHAPTER XII. ver. 9—15.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS AS MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

St. Paul, having enforced those particular duties which concern us more immediately as members of the church, proceeds, in the sequel of the chapter, which will form the subject of this and the following section, to point out those duties which belong to us as members of society.

⁵ Archbishop Leighton.

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31.

*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*¹

The above passage opens with an exhortation, which is the groundwork of all that follows; viz. *Let love be without dissimulation.* While our apostle was discussing the grand leading articles of the Christian faith, and was referring continually to the doctrine of our free justification by Christ, he did not enlarge on the subject of Christian love; inasmuch as it has not any share in the matter of forgiveness of sin, either to merit it, or to receive it. But now that he is directing our attention to all the duties and the relations of the Christian life, he assigns the first place to love, as the fruit which “springs out necessarily of a true and lively faith,”² and as the grace which must pervade every part of our daily conversation. *Let LOVE be without dissimulation.* And what, brethren, is the whole sum of the law but *love*? love to God, and love to man. These two contain all; and the

¹ Ver. 9—15.² Article xii.

former of the two contains the latter. Love to God is the only true principle of all due love to man. For the engaging of the whole mind and soul to the love of God, does not so engross it, that there should be no kind of love communicable to man ; but, on the contrary, it refines the latter, that it may flow forth the purer and the better. All love, therefore, should, as it were, be first called in to God, to be purified, and then directed into its right channel ; so that man may be loved *in* God, and *for* God. And so to love man is to love God himself ; the love of man taking its rise from Him, and terminating in Him ; and “in this blessed circle is the proper motion of celestial divine love !”³

Of this love to man, flowing from love to God, St. Paul says that it must be *without dissimulation* ;⁴ that is, as he expresses it elsewhere,⁵ it must proceed “out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned :” out of a “pure heart,” as the seat of love ; out of “a good conscience,” as the companion of love ; and out of “faith unfeigned,” as the cause of love. A love such as this consists in a real benevolence of soul, and good will to all. It is a love which disposes us readily to forgive evil, and to do good upon all

³ Archbishop Leighton.

⁴ It has been acutely and justly remarked, with respect to Lord Chesterfield’s maxims, that instead of *love without dissimulation*, they inculcate *dissimulation without love*.

⁵ 1 Tim. i. 5.

occasions. But, as the apostle proceeds to remind us, it has nothing to do with a spirit of complacency in the sins of those around us. No, says St. Paul to all the disciples of Christ, the true love of man which flows from the love of God, will be shewn by your *abhorring that which is evil; and cleaving to that which is good*. The man who has been “renewed in the spirit of his mind,”⁶ cannot endure the unholiness and impurity of this sinful world: he *abhors that which is evil*. And if there are those who laugh at this delicacy of spirit, it is because they know not that it arises from the “wisdom, which is from above,”⁷ which indeed is “peaceable,” but first “pure,” and which cannot admit of any peace or agreement with persons or things that are impure. The man who has been “renewed in the spirit of his mind,” is found also to *cleave to that which is good*. The original word⁸ denotes being joined to that which is good, with a strong and indissoluble bond. It expresses a vehement and inseparable affection; an affection which leads the believer to love and rejoice in all the good which he sees in others, and to desire and seek after all the good to which he can attain himself. In using this expression, therefore, the apostle seems to say; Learn to know what is truly good; learn to appreciate the excellency and the beauty of true holiness, and it will be impossible

⁶ Eph. iv. 23.⁷ James iii. 17.⁸ κολλώμενοι from κολλαν, *conglutino*.

to separate your affections from it. And if many, therefore, are so soon shaken in the profession of the Christian faith, it is because they know not what it is thus to “receive the *love* of the truth, that they may be saved :”⁸ it is because they know not what it is to have the heart united to Jesus Christ, who is, with the fullest emphasis, **THE GOOD** after which we are continually to seek, and to which we are stedfastly to *cleave* !

St. Paul enlarges on the subject of love to man, in the tenth verse, saying, *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another.* Now it has been truly and beautifully said⁹ that Christian brethren are united by a threefold cord. Two wreaths of this cord are common to other men ; but the third is the strongest, and it is theirs peculiarly. Their bodies are derived from the same man ; and their souls have been created by the same God ; but their new life, by which they are most entirely *brethren*, is derived from the same Mediator, Jesus Christ : yea, in Him they are all *one body*, receiving life from him their glorious *head*, who is so emphatically called **THE FIRSTBORN among many BRETHREN**.¹ This spirit of *brotherly love* is, in truth, like the “precious ointment”² which runs down from the head of our great high priest, even to the “skirts of his garment ;” so that all true

⁸ See 2 Thess. ii. 10.

⁹ Archbishop Leighton on St. Peter.

¹ Chap. viii. 29.

² Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

believers are known to be "Christ's disciples" by the "love which they have one to another."³ See, then, says the apostle, that, as the fellow-members of Christ's mystical body, ye be *kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

St. Paul, having thus touched upon that spirit of true humility which is the inseparable companion of *brotherly love*, immediately adds, *not slothful in business*; thereby shewing that the humility of Christians is not to be considered as only another name for listlessness or inactivity; but that it is always to be accompanied by diligence in our several callings. He then exhorts Christians *to be fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.* And by thus joining together, so to speak, the *inward* and the *outward* life of the Christian, St. Paul leads us to admire the beautiful harmony and the perfect symmetry of the Christian character. The *love* which animates and directs the believer's heart, does not suffer him to attend to any one or more duties, to the exclusion of others; but he endeavours in all things to obey God's blessed will. While his humility, therefore, is free from inactivity, his *diligence in business* does not engender a deadness to the concerns of his soul, but he is *fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*

I would observe, in the first place, with respect to these last two clauses, that they should always

³ John xiii. 35.

be viewed in connexion with each other. For, by placing them together, the apostle shews, on the one hand, that the *fervour of spirit*, which he would here enforce, is not a sickly, distempered, feverish heat, but that strength of soul which, under the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, will always be experienced by those who *serve the Lord*. And he shews, on the other hand, that our *service of the Lord*, is not to be a cold, formal, heartless service, but a service distinguished by that holy *fervour of spirit*, which shall carry the believer on through every trial, and not suffer him to be disturbed or discouraged by the difficulties which may cross his path.

I would observe, secondly, that these two clauses may be viewed in connexion either with what precedes or follows them. If you look *back* to the exhortation, which has just preceded, *not to be slothful in business*, you may regard these words, *servent in spirit, serving the Lord*, as denoting those principles which, while they ensure the right direction, will promote the uninterrupted exercise, of diligence in our worldly callings. For this holy *fervour*, which the Christian derives from the *service of the Lord*, will so strengthen him for all which lies before him, that he will cheerfully go through all difficulties and discouragements without weariness or impatience. And if you look *forward* to the exhortation in the twelfth verse, you may regard the same holy *fervour of spirit*, which is

experienced in the *service of the Lord*, as preparing the way for *rejoicing in hope*; being *patient in tribulation*; and *continuing instant in prayer*.

My brethren, you here behold the three grand remedies against afflictions; *hope, patience and prayer*. 1. When afflictions come, the children of God do not faint in their hearts; but they *rejoice* and are glad, because they look for salvation in the end. By *hope*⁴ they lay hold, even now, of that complete salvation, and theirs is a hope which *maketh not ashamed*. 2. But if their afflictions multiply upon them, then to *hope* must be added *patience*; that heavenly grace which enables the believer to wait upon the Lord; to tarry his leisure; and to submit, in all things, to his blessed will. 3. And St. Paul emphatically reminds us that to *hope* and *patience* must be added *prayer*; that channel through which the “wisdom that is from above,”⁵ descends into the believer’s heart, to “strengthen him with all might, according to God’s glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness.”⁶ “If afraid of fainting,” says Leighton, “yea, if at the point of fainting, *this* it is which revives the soul, and which draws in no less than the strength of God to support it. The Christian knows that all the enemies in the world cannot hinder his access to God. The Christian knows that the closest prison

⁴ See chap. v. 5, and viii. 24.

⁵ James i. 5, and iii. 17.

⁶ Col. i. 11.

cannot shut out his God ; yea, rather that it shuts out all other things and companies, only that he may enjoy the more leisure for his God. Acquaint yourselves, therefore, with this exercise of prayer, and by it with God ; that if days of trouble come, you may know *whither to go*, and *what way* ; and if you know this way, whatever befalls you, you are not much to be bemoaned."

St. Paul having thus described the general duties, both active and passive, which the Christian is to be prepared to exercise amidst all the various relations, and under all the various trials, of human life, proceeds, in the three following verses, to enumerate some particular occasions for the offices of Christian love.

1. *Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality.*⁷ The Christian, therefore, is not to be satisfied with the general benefit derived to society from his more private and selfish labours ; but he is to regard the work of *distributing*, or *communicating*⁸ to the necessity of others, as a work on which he is bound to enter, and in which he is required to labour, according to his ability, as a diligent and faithful steward. I have said that the original word may be rendered COMMUNICATING to the necessity of saints ; and does not this imply that between the rich and the poor there ought to be a perpetual traffic or merchandize ; the rich *communicating* temporal things, in making

⁷ Ver. 13.

⁸ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΟΥΝΤΕΣ.

the poor partakers of their substance; and the poor *communicating* spiritual things, in making the rich partakers of their prayers.

2. Passing on from this particular branch of Christian love, viz. attention to the wants of the poor and needy, to a still higher exercise of the same divine grace, St. Paul says, in the fourteenth verse, *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*⁹ By the earnestness of the above exhortation, in which we are *twice* urged to *bless them which persecute us*, and are afterwards warned *not to curse*, the apostle seems to declare to us, with peculiar emphasis, how difficult is the duty which he here enjoins. It is, as he seems to say, a work contrary to our corrupt nature. It is a work not of the flesh but of the Spirit; and it is only through his gracious influences that believers learn to *bless them which persecute them: to bless, and curse not.*

3. And, assuredly, brethren, it is only through the assistance of the same Holy Spirit, that we can ever be disposed and enabled rightly to discharge that important office of Christian love which is mentioned in the last verse of the passage before us, viz. that of *rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and of weeping with them that weep.*¹ The full scope of this exhortation will be best understood, when viewed with reference to that image of a body, which the apostle employs in this chapter, to de-

⁹ Ver. 14.

¹ Ver. 15.

note the intimate connexion subsisting between the true disciples of Jesus Christ. For if we are *members one of another*,² then must it follow that, “if one member suffer, all the members will suffer with it,” and that “if one member be honoured, all the members will rejoice with it.”³ Let us consider, for instance, how impossible it is for any one part of the natural body to endure pain, or sickness, or languor, or cold, *alone*. How quick is the communication; how sharp the anguish; how general the disorder; how diligent the care to assuage or relieve any indisposition or injury of the least and most distant members! And, again, upon any return of health and ease, how sudden, how sensible, how general is the joy through all the members of that body! And does not all this point out to Christians the obligations which are upon them to take part in the joys and the sorrows of their brethren? insomuch that they may well begin to suspect whether they be really alive in the body of Christ, when such a narrow selfishness has hardened them, as shuts out all tender impressions; when they are cold, benumbed, and utterly bereft of that feeling of sympathy which the different estates of our fellow-members ought to create in our bosoms!⁴

Taught, therefore, by the Holy Spirit, the believer has a heart which easily opens, and which

² See ver. 5.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 26.

⁴ Dean Stanhope in loc.

widely expands itself, to take in the sorrows and sufferings of an afflicted race; and bountiful in *giving*, he is no less tender and soothing in the work of *consolation*. He administers that cordial which is so welcome to every human soul, a real, heartfelt, and christian sympathy; that which abates the sting of suffering, and renders every blessing doubly blest; that which promotes the interchange of every kindly affection, and which, in its fullest exercise, proves its pure source, by partaking of the infinite compassion of Him, who is “not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”⁵

SECTION XL.

CHAP. XII. ver. 16—21.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

In the last section we were called upon to contemplate the Christian as discharging several important duties, both active and passive, amidst the various relations, and under the various trials of

⁵ Heb. iv. 15.

human life. In the present section, we are to contemplate the Christian not only as studying generally to adorn the gospel in all things, but also, and more particularly, as exhibiting in one very important feature, I mean, in the *love of peace*, his resemblance to his divine and all-perfect model.

My brethren, may we not say of *peace*, that it is the very style and phrase of the scriptures? In several passages of the New Testament, God is emphatically entitled the “God of *peace*.”¹ It was expressly foretold of the Messiah, that he was to be the “Prince of *Peace* ;”² and it should be remembered that, at the time of his nativity, Augustus Cæsar, in token of an universal peace, had shut up the mystical gates of the temple of Janus. Moreover, the first message which was sent from heaven, after his nativity, was a message of peace ; “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will toward men.”³ The whole doctrine which, by himself and his apostles, he preached to mankind, is called the “gospel of *peace*.”⁴ The last legacy which he bequeathed to his disciples at his departure out of the world, was a legacy of peace ; “*My peace* I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”⁵ It is enumerated also among the blessed influences of the Holy Ghost in the hearts

¹ Rom. xv. 33 ; Heb. xiii. 20 ; 1 Thes. v. 23.

² Is. ix. 6.

³ Luke ii. 14.

⁴ Rom. x. 15.

⁵ John xiv. 27.

of believers; for “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*.”⁶ And, in the last place, we are plainly taught to regard it as one of our highest and sweetest privileges, when we read the prayer of our apostle, in behalf of the Roman converts, that *the God of hope would fill them with all joy, and PEACE in believing.*”⁷

“Now certainly,” says South,⁸ “that must needs be a glorious thing, which thus gives titles of glory to the Prince of Glory; which thus fills, as it were, the heraldry of heaven; and which calls gifts, graces, blessings, and every good thing, after its own name. The heathen custom was to derive their names of honour from the triumphs of *war*; ⁹ but the Christian religion, which came to unite and cement society, to compose differences, and to conquer only the minds and the hearts of men, has made up its catalogue of honours with names of *peace*.”

It is, accordingly, the *love of peace*, and the subjugation of our evil and discordant passions, which our apostle enforces in the passage before us; urging it with the greatest strength of expression, and intermingling the language of the most tender and moving entreaty. *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own*

⁶ Gal. v. 22.

⁷ Rom. xv. 13.

⁸ Dr. South's Sermons, vol. vii.

⁹ As Numidicus, Africanus, and the like.

conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written,¹ Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord. Therefore² if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.³

The apostle, still addressing Christians as forming *one body in Christ*, and as being *every one members one of another*,⁴ says to them in the sixteenth verse; See that, as belonging to the same body, you are *of the same mind one toward another*. See that you are all united in *one mind and affection*, judging yourselves interested in the welfare of every member of the body to which you belong. Or, (as some interpret the words, with more particular reference to the other clauses in the verse,⁵) see that you have the *same respect one for another*; each of you bearing towards others the same *good opinion* or *respect* which they bear towards thee. And, to this end, *mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits*. We have, brethren, the authority of the wisest of men for

¹ Deut. xxxii. 35.

² Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

³ Ver. 16—21.

⁴ Ver. 5.

⁵ Wolfius and Bishop Hall in loc.

saying, "Only by *pride* cometh contention."⁶ And is it not a towering ambition; a high estimate of our own opinion; a partial judgment in our own cause, which leads to more than half the dissension, and strife, and animosity, which we witness in the world around us? Let us only cultivate a spirit of *humility*, the inseparable companion, as we have seen,⁷ of that *love* which is *without dissimulation*, and we gain the principle of true, and solid, and lasting *peace*. Let us not be *wise*, or great, or good, *in our own conceits*, and then, as St. Paul exhorts us at the beginning of the seventeenth verse, we shall *recompense to no man evil for evil*.

But not resting here, not content with endeavouring, under all circumstances, to exercise the utmost degree of patience and forbearance, the Christian studiously cultivates all the arts of peace; *providing things honest, (or things honourable⁸ and of good report,) in the sight of all men*. For it is not enough, brethren, that a gem be intrinsically precious; but it ought to be so set that its beauty may be apparent to all beholders.⁹ And, accordingly, the apostles often inculcate the necessity of adorning the doctrine of the gospel with the ornament of a gentle and courteous conversation. "Provide for *honest or honourable things*," says our apostle, in the second epistle to the Corin-

⁶ Prov. xiii. 10.⁷ Ver. 9, 10.⁸ καλὰ.⁹ Bengel in loc.

thians, "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."¹ Yea, as he says again in writing to the Philippian converts, "whatsoever things are *lovely* and of *good report*; if there be any virtue, and if there be any *praise*, think on these things."² And, in like manner, St. Peter says to the Christian converts, "have your conversation *honest*, or of *good report*, among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your *good works*, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."³

St. Paul now enters more directly upon the subject of Christian peaceableness; and well knowing the obstacles which the Christian must here expect to encounter, he does not speak *absolutely*, as in the preceding exhortation, where we are plainly taught that we must, at all times and under all circumstances, *provide things honest in the sight of all men*; but, qualifying the language of his exhortation, he says, IF IT BE POSSIBLE, *as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*. It may not be *possible* for us, brethren, considering the dispositions which *some* men possess, to live peaceably with *all*. Or such conditions of peace may be tendered as it may be utterly unlawful for us to accept; for, as we are reminded elsewhere, *peace* must ever be accompanied with *holi-*

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 21.² Phil. iv. 8.³ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

ness ;⁴ and we must always be careful, therefore, not to have *peace* with *men*, as, at the same time, we do not make *war* with *God*. But, whatever blame may rest with others, let nothing be wanting on our parts, so that, *if it be possible*, we may live *peaceably with all men*.

Increasing, as he proceeds, in the earnestness of his language, St. Paul now says, *dearly beloved*, (thus beautifully illustrating, in the very terms he employs, that tenderness of spirit which he desires to inculcate,) *avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*. Now if it were true, brethren, that the phrase of *heaping coals of fire*, invariably denoted, in the Old Testament, the infliction of punishment by the Almighty, we could scarcely suppose it to be otherwise here. But when we call to mind that beautiful passage in the book of Canticles, where Solomon evidently employs the expression of coals of fire, to denote the intense power and the great strength of *love* ;⁵ (speaking of the “coals” of “love,” as those “coals of fire” which have a “most vehement flame,” and which “many waters cannot quench ;”) and when we consider that it is the same royal preacher

⁴ Heb. xii. 14.

⁵ Sol. Song. viii. 6, 7.

of Israel who uses the proverbial expression to which St. Paul here refers ; may we not believe that our apostle quotes this proverb, as tending, in perfect harmony with the mercies of the gospel dispensation, to illustrate the peaceful and blessed triumphs of Christian love? It is, therefore, as if St. Paul had said ; If you seek revenge, here you may find it ; a noble revenge, and the only one which you are permitted to take. Be avenged on your adversary by acts of kindness. Shame him by your forbearance. Wound him by your generosity. Touch to the quick all that is open and ingenuous in his nature. And if you persevere in the exercise of Christian forbearance, you may indulge the belief that, under the divine blessing, you will bring your adversary to more than even silence, shame, or pain. You may indulge the belief that, with the assistance of God's holy Spirit, *conviction* will follow the pain and shame, and that *confession* will spring out of the reflections of silence. And what will this be but *melting down* his obdurate heart with the *flames of heavenly love* ? ⁶

This interpretation of the scope of the proverbial expression here employed by the apostle, would seem to derive confirmation from the words which accompany it, both in the Old and New Testament. For if we look to the book of Pro-

⁶ Archdeacon Hoare's Sermons on the Christian character.

verbs,⁷ we shall find that, after using the language which the apostle here repeats, Solomon adds, “and the Lord shall reward thee.” Words which, taken in this connexion, may be thus interpreted; “the Lord will reward thee,” as one who has imitated his goodness, and who has thus been a subordinate benefactor to himself; for “*he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.*”⁸ And when we regard the connexion in which the words are placed by the apostle, we find that he follows up the above proverb by saying, *be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* The forbearance of Christians will make them glorious conquerors; and they shall comprehend, from their own happy experience, the full purport of the wise man’s declaration, in another part of the book of Proverbs, viz. “he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.”⁹

I would add, in conclusion, brethren, that the same view of the passage before us, is adopted by the good Bishop Latimer, in one of his sermons on the Lord’s Prayer: “When we are about to do our enemy a foul turn,” says our venerable reformer, “then he hath gotten the victory over us; then he hath made us as wicked as himself. But we ought to *overcome evil with goodness*; we should overcome our enemy with well-doing.” He then

⁷ Prov. xxv. 22.⁸ Matt. v. 45.⁹ Prov. xvi. 32.

goes on to say, with his characteristic simplicity, “ that when he was in Cambridge, he heard a minister of the gospel expounding the epistle to the Romans, and that when the preacher came to this passage, he brought in an example, saying, that he knew in London a great rich merchant, which merchant had a very poor neighbour. Yet, for all his poverty, he loved him very well, and lent him money at his need, and let him come to his table whensoever he would. In process of time, the rich man forsook the errors of the Romish church; but the poor man remained a Papist still; and, upon one occasion, he took great displeasure against his rich neighbour, which he manifested in various ways. The rich man did every thing in his power to conciliate him, but all in vain; till, one day, meeting him in a narrow passage, he caught him by the hand, and said, ‘ Neighbour, what is come into your heart, to take such displeasure against me? what have I done against you? Tell me, and I will be ready at all times to make you amends.’ Finally, he spake so gently, so charitably, so lovingly, and so friendly, that it wrought upon the poor man’s heart, who fell down upon his knees and asked his forgiveness. The rich man forgave him, and so took him again to his favour; and they loved as well as ever they did before. And here,” adds the single-hearted Latimer, “ you see an example of the PRACTICE of *God’s word*, in such sort that the poor man, having

great hatred and malice against the rich man, was brought, through the meekness and gentleness of the latter, from his error and wickedness, to the KNOWLEDGE of *God's word*. I wish you would consider this example well, and follow it."

My Christian brethren, you must feel that the above narrative admirably illustrates the spirit of peaceableness which St. Paul is here desiring to enforce. And if your hearts are touched with this simple but powerful representation of the peaceful and blessed triumphs of Christian love; if you really regard this narrative as beautifully exhibiting the manner in which the *coals of Christian love* are able to melt down the proud, rebellious, unforgiving heart of man; you will pray to him who has "taught us that all our doings *without charity*, are nothing worth,"¹ and who only can "pour into our hearts this most excellent gift of *charity*," beseeching him to grant that, as the disciples of Jesus Christ, who repaid our "evil" with "good," and our "hatred" with "love,"² you may have grace *not to be overcome of evil*, but, at all times and under all circumstances, to *overcome evil with good*.

¹ Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

² See Ps. cix. 5.

SECTION XLI.

CHAP. xiii. ver. 1—7.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS AS MEMBERS OF THE STATE.

The wisdom and goodness of God, which shine so conspicuously in the natural order and dependence of things in the frame of the universe, appear also very plainly, and commend themselves to us very powerfully, in the civil order, which he has instituted in the societies of men, in the world which we inhabit; so that, whether we consider the Most High as “making the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise him,” or as restraining “the madness of the people,”¹ we are constrained to acknowledge that “he hath not left himself without witness.”² The illustrious characters of his Godhead shine everywhere; and we may rest assured, that he will assert his right in this lower world; for it is a part of his creation, though but a meaner part. He rules in the kingdoms of men; and he that rules will judge. Let men beware, then, how they employ the language of mockery on a subject like this; “for,” as Lord Bacon has so solemnly

¹ Ps. lxxv. 7, 8.² Acts. xiv. 17

served, “ the jests and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne ; and they who have taught themselves to turn his laws, and the whole frame of his government over the world, into ridicule, should be advised then to judge of their jest, when their hour of laughter shall be over !”

It must always be remembered, brethren, that the immediate fountain of the magistrate’s power and office, is our blessed Redeemer and Lord. For to him “ all power is given in heaven and in earth ;”³ “ by him kings reign ;”⁴ “ he is the head over all things to the church ;”⁵ and by him the divine goodness flows towards a lost and guilty world. This plainly infers a peculiar obligation upon all who bear the Christian name, to serve the proper ends of this branch of his power ; seeing that they profess to acknowledge him as Lord and Christ. And sure we are, therefore, that they who, to the utmost of their power, endeavour to promote this design, are serving herein not the interest of a party, but, so to speak, the interest of the universal Ruler ; yea, the interest of our blessed Redeemer, and of mankind !

These observations may serve as a fit introduction to that portion of the thirteenth chapter which is to be considered in the present section, and in which St. Paul addresses Christians, when considered as members of the state. Having, in the preceding chapter, exhorted us as members of the

³ Matt. xxviii. 18.

⁴ Prov. viii. 15.

⁵ Eph. i. 22.

church, and as members of society, he now enters upon the subject of political and civil subjection. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power, do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*⁶

When we view this passage in connexion with the former part of the epistle, we shall perceive with what admirable propriety the apostle here enters upon the consideration of the civil duties of the Christian. In the preceding chapter, he had said that Christians are *not to avenge themselves*,

⁶ Ver. 1—7.

*But rather to give place unto wrath.*⁷ But, to shew that this exhortation is not to be understood as taking away all power from man to punish wrong doers, he now teaches that magistrates are the *ministers of God, revengers to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* Again, in the former part of the epistle,^a he had stated, that Christians are no longer under the condemning power of the law. But, to shew that there is nothing incompatible between Christian liberty and civil magistracy, he now addresses them as members of the state, and exhibits, in the clearest and strongest light, the grounds of their obedience to *the powers that be.* And when we consider that this epistle was addressed to Christian converts, who were among the inhabitants of the Imperial City, we may regard the passage before us as constituting, on this very important topic, a public apology for the Christian faith. *Let every soul,* saith St. Paul, *be SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* And, in the course of the four following verses, it is repeated three several times, that the ruling powers are to be regarded as the *ministers of God.* Here, then, the apostle plainly defines the main ground of submission to human authority, viz. because God himself has appointed

⁷ Ch. xii. 19.^a See chaps. iii. iv. v.

civil government as a common good amongst men: in other words; because all government is, in such sort, of Divine institution, that, be the form of any particular government what it may, the submission of the individual is a principal branch of that religious duty which each man owes to God. The particular forms and limitations of government are matters with which the gospel does not interfere. Christianity does not undertake to model kingdoms and commonwealths by any fixed standard; it does not teach how to *establish*, but how to *obey*. And hence it is that we find St. Peter speaking of civil government as the “ordinance of *man*.”⁹ “Submit yourselves,” he says, “to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake.” His meaning evidently is, that, with regard to the particular forms of government, and the choice of particular persons to govern, civil authority is only a human ordinance. But by enjoining Christians, at the same time, to submit “for the Lord’s sake,” he clearly teaches, in entire agreement with his brother apostle, that both the good of government, and the duty of subjection to it, are God’s ordinance. “Certainly,” says Bishop Sanderson, “the Holy Spirit of God, which speaketh in these two great apostles, is not contrary to itself. The truth is, that the *substance* of the power of any magistrate is the ordinance of God; and that is St. Paul’s meaning. But the *specification of the cir-*

⁹ 1 Pet., ii. 13.

circumstances thereto belonging is, as St. Peter termeth it, a *human ordinance*, introduced by custom or by positive law."

Our apostle having reminded the Christian converts that *the powers that be are ordained of God*, and that *whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*, solemnly adds, in the last clause of the second verse, *and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*. That is, they shall receive to themselves *judgment or condemnation*,¹ and must look for some punishment, if not from the magistrate, at least from the supreme Sovereign, whose laws they break, and whose order they endeavour to reverse. But it is suggested by Bishop Sherlock that in these words, *they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation*, we should understand the apostle as entering upon a second argument² in confirmation of his doctrine that *every soul should be subject to the higher powers*, and as setting forth the certain evil consequences which, even in this life, are found to pursue seditious and turbulent spirits; seeing that they render themselves justly obnoxious to the powers of the world, and are liable to their judgment. Bishop Sherlock would interpret the above clause, therefore, in connexion with the following verses; and would of course consider the

¹ κρῖμα λήθονται.

² Viz. subjection for wrath; the first argument being, subjection for conscience sake. See verse 5.

declaration that *rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil*, as arising out of the remark in the preceding verse, that *they who resist shall receive to themselves condemnation*.

Now it is plain, that if we thus consider the above words in the third verse, as being an inference from the clause immediately preceding, we must understand the apostle as referring, by *good works*, chiefly to obedience, and by *evil works*, to resistance. I find the same interpretation given by an old and learned expositor,³ who says, that by *good and evil works*, in this connexion, we are to understand works which are such, not *theologically*, but *civilly*; works such as are enjoined or prohibited by the good laws of the kingdom or city in which we live. And certainly this exposition suits with St. Paul's main design in the passage before us, which is to inculcate *obedience to the powers that be*.

Wilt thou then, as the apostle goes on to ask, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. In the parallel passage of St. Peter,⁴ we find that apostle speaking of governors as being sent "for the *punishment of evil doers, and for the*

³ Wilson in loc.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 14.

praise of them that do well." And we clearly infer, therefore, from the manner in which the term *praise* is employed by each apostle, in opposition to punishment, that it must be understood to denote protection and encouragement, the only proper rewards which good subjects can expect from their *governors*. I may add, that the above interpretation is strongly confirmed by that passage of the first epistle to Timothy, where St. Paul exhorts us to pray "for kings, and for all that is in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all goodness and honesty."⁵ The *peace* and *quiet* of society is the very end of temporal government. When it is duly promoted by those who are in authority, then do they indeed appear to be, what they were ordained to be, *ministers of God for good to the people*. In return for this *good* received from rulers, the people are assuredly bound, on their part, to yield obedience and submission; and, as a reward for such obedience, they shall have the praise and protection of those who are in authority over them.⁶

Such, then, are the two arguments by which our apostle supports his doctrine of obedience to

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

⁶ Archbishop Usher, in his treatise on the power of the Prince and the Obedience of the Subject, quotes the following admirable paragraph, by Primasius, on the last clause of the third verse. "Either thou dost justly, and the just power will praise thee, or, thou dost unjustly, although the unjust power should condemn thee, the just God will crown thee."

rulers; and they are thus summed up by him in the fifth verse; *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* We are to submit *for wrath*, (which is to be understood here as relating to the present life, and to the magistrate's power,) because the magistrate has power from God *to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.* We are to submit also *for CONSCIENCE SAKE*; because *he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ORDINANCE OF GOD.*

This is, indeed, the main argument of all; and, as I would now go on to ask, what other argument could possibly bear the weight laid upon it by the apostle? *Let every SOUL*, he says, *be subject unto the higher powers*; and assuredly, brethren, no one can oblige *all souls* to subjection, other than he, whose only all souls are. Whatever convenience, therefore, men might find in submitting, yet, unless rulers were *God's ministers*, there could never be any lasting and necessary tie of obedience. Upon any other supposition, we might be subject to our rulers from motives of expediency; but their being *ordained of God*, is the only consideration which can engage us to be subject *for conscience sake.* For we know that God only can bind; we know that God only is Lord of the *conscience*; and we know, therefore, that *conscience* can of right submit to no commands but his, as they are issued, either immediately from himself, or from those who hold and act under him. This is the truth which the Bible inculcates; it is

the conviction of this truth which makes the good Christian the good subject; and sure I am, that were it really felt and acknowledged by all, it would radiate an irresistible appeal at once to the ruler and the ruled. It would teach the one to know "whose minister he is," and the other to remember "whose authority he hath;" and it would thus tend to knit their hearts together in him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords, and who does from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth."⁷

Dwell then, I beseech you, brethren, on this argument of obedience *for conscience sake*, and say whether it is not suited to ennoble men's actions even in civil things, and to give them a character almost divine. For all is surely turned into sacrifice to God, when all is done *for God*; when subjects obey magistrates, and when servants obey their masters, *for his command's sake*; each of them still thinking, while performing the duties of his particular calling, this I do for God; even my ordinary labour and works, and my just obedience to men, I offer up to him! "This is indeed the philosopher's stone," says Leighton, "turning actions of lower metal into gold, when we can take up the language of the psalmist, and say, 'I set the Lord *always before me*!'"⁸

Having inculcated the duty of obedience to *the powers that be*, St. Paul now closes this part of his

⁷ Collects for the King.

⁸ Ps. xvi. 8.

subject, first by noticing a particular instance of such obedience, viz. that of paying tribute; and, secondly, by shewing that, under the duties of subjection, he comprehends those which are owing not only to kings and princes, but also to every other superior.

1. He notices, in the first place, a particular instance of obedience to the *powers that be*, viz. that of paying tribute. *For for this cause*, he says, (that is, *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*,) *pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing*. The manner in which St. Paul here expresses himself is worthy of remark. He does not say, *give*, but *PAY ye tribute*: as if he would teach us, that tributes are to be regarded, not as *gifts*, but as *debts*; not as what may be voluntarily and occasionally bestowed, but as dues, to be regularly and punctually discharged. And there is a peculiar propriety and force in the apostle's exhortation, when we consider that, as Chrysostom remarks, there was, at the time when this epistle was written, a strong report that the apostles were of a seditious and innovating spirit; and that their principles and practices tended to encourage men in "not rendering to Cesar the things which were Cesar's."⁹

2. But, not resting here, St. Paul shews, in the last verse of the passage, that, under the duties of

⁹ Matt. xxii. 21.

subjection, he comprehends those which are owing, not only to kings and princes, but also to every other superior. *Render therefore to ALL their DUES* ; (still speaking of Christian obedience, in its widest acceptation, as a *debt* which we are bound to discharge :) *tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.* These words are followed up by an earnest exhortation to the fullest exercise of Christian love ; and I pass on at once to the consideration of the passage in question, because I am fully persuaded, brethren, that whenever, through the renewal of our wills in Christ Jesus, love shall reign in our hearts, then, and not till then, shall we be prepared to *render to all their dues !*

SECTION XLII.

CHAPTER XIII. ver. 8—10.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Owe no man any thing, says the apostle, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal,

Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour : therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹

It may be truly said that, in this part of the epistle, in which St. Paul gives us the rules of the Christian life, he sets forth at large, as the duty of every Christian, that which he continually set before himself, as his own study and exercise, viz. “to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” ² He has, for instance, at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, reminded us, on the one hand, that man is to give *the* LORD *his due* ; that is, *ourselves entire*. For he has there told that we are to *present our bodies a LIVING sacrifice* ; thus plainly implying that the *soul* is to accompany the *body* : and what is it, in the soul, that offers up this whole burnt-offering to God ; what is the fire that makes it ascend, but *love* ? The apostle now goes on to remind us, on the other hand, that toward MEN likewise, as well as toward GOD, *love is all*.

We have seen, indeed, that, in the preceding chapter, St. Paul has already touched upon the exercise of love toward men. And, in the first seven verses of this chapter, we have seen how he has interrupted this subject, in order that he might

¹ Ver. 8—10.

² Acts xxiv. 16.

give a particular exhortation respecting subjection to the ruling powers, as being *ordained of God*. He now returns from this digression, to the main, comprehensive, and universal duty of love; and thus passes from the mention of those particular duties which we owe our superiors, to this general due, this standing debt, which all men owe one to another. *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.* As rulers and subjects; as ministers and people; as buyers and sellers; as husbands and wives; as masters and servants; you have, all of you, particular duties which you are required to discharge with punctuality and fidelity. Discharge these several duties; pay these several debts; and *owe no man any thing, BUT to love one another.* For you are always to remember that there is *one debt* which you can never fully discharge, but which you must always be paying; and that is, *to love one another.* This debt of love is universal and continual. *You all owe it; and you owe it unto all.* And unto whom you owe it, you never pay it, unless you acknowledge that you *owe it still.*

Dwell then, brethren, upon the many points of distinction between this and every other debt. 1. Civil debts are due only to particular persons; but the debt of love is due to all. 2. When debts in money are paid, our substance is diminished; but as love is paid to others, it increases in our-

selves.² For, if it be true, on the one hand, that the debt of love is a debt which knows no measure and no end ; it is equally true, on the other hand, that the more frequently we pay it, the more willing and able shall we find ourselves to repeat the payment. 3. Other debts may be paid while we live here, but the debt of love cannot be satisfied in this life. It is due in heaven, to God, to angels, and to saints. 4. Other debts are sometimes dispensed with and forgiven ; but it is not so with the debt of love. Man cannot, and God will not, discharge us from the exercise of love ; though He will, of his infinite mercy, forgive us the imperfection of our love.

Let us consider, therefore, that Christian love is a debt which we should be ready at all times to pay to all, without even wishing to regard ourselves as released from this obligation towards any one of our fellow-creatures. Other debts, it is true, being once paid, are no more debts ; but love, although it *be* paid, is a debt which is *always being paid*, and is a debt which is *ever owing* ; because, whether we look to the command of God, to our common nature, or to our common profession, the grounds for the discharge of this debt are universal and perpetual.

St. Paul, having thus urged the universal and perpetual payment of the debt of Christian love,

² Cum redditur ab homine, crescit in homine.

goes on to enforce his exhortation, saying, *for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* Not indeed that the law is fulfilled simply by *doing no evil to our neighbour*; but that, according to our blessed Lord's interpretation,³ the *neglect* of doing any good which we are able to do for him, is *doing evil*: so that he only, in the scriptural sense, *worketh no ill to his neighbour*, who seeks, under all circumstances, and by all possible methods, always to do good to all around him.

It is quite plain, indeed, that in the passage before us, *working no ill to our neighbour*, is to be considered as only another expression for *loving another*, and for *loving our neighbour as ourselves*. It is plain, also, that the two last phrases are to be regarded as equivalent. And this leads me to observe how extensive is the signification in which the word *neighbour* is used in scripture. We are here told, for instance, that every commandment of the law is *briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. We then have the same truth inculcated in the

³ See Mark iii. 4.

following emphatic terms; viz. that such *love is, the fulfilling of the law*. And if we desire to know *who is our NEIGHBOUR*, we have only to go back to the eighth verse, where St. Paul reminds us that the word denotes every person who is placed within our reach and influence. For, in that verse, instead of saying, *He that loveth his NEIGHBOUR*, our apostle says, *He that loveth ANOTHER hath fulfilled the law*.

Now, when the apostle speaks of this love as *fulfilling the law*, it is evident that he refers, more immediately, to the duties of the second table; but it must ever be remembered that, as our Lord has taught us,⁴ the right fulfilment of these duties is inseparably connected with that *love of God*, which is the first and great commandment of the law. As I reminded you in a former section,⁵ the *love of God* must always be regarded as, at once, the sum and the source of all true Christian obedience. When the whole soul is possessed with the love of him, all is acceptable and sweet that he commands; whether it be what he commands, as immediately referrible to himself, or that which is to be the rule of our carriage to men, as having been prescribed and commanded by him. For then, and not otherwise, is the love of our neighbour the *fulfilling of the law*, when it flows from the love of Him in whose law the command is found. We know, brethren, that some persons are by nature

⁴ Matt. vii. 11, 12.

⁵ Sect. xxxix.

gentle, and kind, and inoffensive toward all; but then only do we *fulfil the law*, when we obey out of regard to the law of God, and out of love to Him whose law it is. The love of God, therefore, in the heart, is the only spring of all true love to our neighbour; and hence the Christian learns how possible it is to “love God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind,”⁶ and yet, at the same time, and upon that very account, “to love his neighbour as himself.” For the Christian knows that when the heart has mounted upwards, and has been once fixed in God, then, and not till then, it will be regulated towards man, according to his will; yea, the Christian knows and is persuaded that the love which *worketh no ill to his neighbour* can be rightly exercised by those only who, being acquainted with God, and remembering that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them,⁷ have learned to argue, with the beloved disciple, that “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!”⁸

Brethren, let us lay these things to heart; and while we survey the dimensions of that love which is indeed *the fulfilling of the law*, let us consider, at the same time, that not the strongest arguments will ever persuade man to exercise such love, either toward God or man, until the Lord, by his grace, shall himself teach it, and impress it on the heart!

⁶ Matt. xxii. 37—39.

⁷ Chap. v. 8.

⁸ 1 John iv. 11.

Let us remember this ; and as the apostles prayed, saying, “ Lord increase our faith,” ⁹ so let us deem it our sacred duty to pour forth many a fervent prayer at the throne of grace, saying, *Lord, increase our LOVE.* For the more we *love*, the more shall we *fulfil the law* ; and the more we *fulfil the law*, the more shall we resemble God, the giver of the law ; and the more nearly we approach to God in *holiness*, the more shall we know of that *happiness* which passeth all understanding !

SECTION XLIII.

CHAPTER XIII. ver. 11—14.

CHRISTIANS TO BE DISTINGUISHED BY A PURE AND HOLY CONVERSATION.

We are sometimes told, brethren, of the trifling injury occasioned by personal vices, compared with the extensive good which results from the exercise of active kindness. Such a comparison, even supposing it to be allowable, must be in itself very problematical ; since, in calculating the ill effects of a profligate course of life, its remote as well as its immediate effects, the pernicious influence of its example must be taken into the account. It is a

⁹ Luke xvii. 5.

comparison, however, which no one has any right to make. No man can be justified in striking a balance between the two cases. This is not Christianity. Let the balance lie on which side it will, this is not pure religion. For, as the apostle James declares,¹ “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”²

And, in like manner, St. Paul, in the epistle before us, reminds the Roman converts that the exercise of *mutual charity* is always to be accompanied by a *pure and holy conversation*. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*³

And THAT, says the apostle, KNOWING THE TIME. In other words, be diligent in the discharge of all the duties which I have been enumerating, and, more especially, in the exercise of love one toward another, *knowing the time*, or considering the day

¹ James i. 27² Dr. Paley's Sermons.³ Ver. 11—14.

of grace which has now dawned upon you. Consider that you are no longer in the darkness and ignorance of your unconverted state, but that the gospel light has risen upon you, and that *now, therefore, it is high time to awake out of sleep.*

It may be truly said, brethrer, that we *awake out of sleep*, and that the day of grace begins to dawn upon us, when we receive the Lord Jesus into our hearts by faith ; but we must up, and be doing, lest *sleep* should again be creeping over all the faculties of our souls. Nay, more than this, we must always remember that man's life is a warfare, and that men are soldiers. We must keep our standing and our watch, lest we should be unawares assaulted and overcome. We have many and mighty and fierce adversaries ; the devil, who goes about as “ a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ;”⁴ the world, which is spreading its snares on every side ; and the flesh, which is always wrestling and fighting against the spirit. Surely, then, there is no place where the Christian soldier ought to feel secure. “ Not in heaven,” says the holy Bernard, “ not in paradise, and much less in the world.” In heaven the angels fell from the very presence of the Godhead ; Adam fell, in paradise, from the place of happiness ; and Judas, in the world, from the school of our Saviour. We know, moreover, that, in the time of Noah, they lived in great security, until the flood came and suddenly over-

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 8.

whelmed them. And we know that, in the time of Lot, the men of Sodom lived in as great security, until they were as suddenly consumed with fire. "Thus with *fire* and *water* hath security been plagued. God hath armed the very elements against it; and yet we continue to be careless still, as if we would try whether He, who awakened those of old, by sending *water* upon the one, and *fire* upon the other, may not yet awaken us by causing the *earth* to swallow us up!"⁵

It is to warn us against the danger to which our own deceitful hearts are thus continually exposing us, and to enforce the duty of Christian watchfulness, that the apostle adds, *for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*. St. Paul here speaks of that complete salvation in heaven, which is the end of the Christian's faith, and the crown of the Christian's hope;⁶ reminding all true believers that, like those who run in a race, they are daily drawing nearer and nearer to the "end of their faith, even the *salvation of their souls*." And if the day of our final salvation be *NEARER than when we believed*, does it not follow, brethren, that, as we daily and hourly approach the end of our course, we should run with the greater diligence and earnestness? Seeing, then, that every day and every hour brings us nearer to the goal, and that the crown for which we are running is an unfading crown, let us be earnest in "running the race that

⁵ Archbishop Sandys.

⁶ See Chap. viii. 24, and 1 Pet. i. 9.

is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”⁷ Let us cast off all hindrances, and let us strive vigorously, as those who desire to “lay hold on eternal life, whereunto we are called.”⁸ Regarding ourselves, day by day, as almost within the reach of the crown of glory, let us go on, with new zeal and new courage, “from strength to strength,”⁹ giving all diligence to “add to our faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity:” so that “an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”¹

Yea, says the apostle, (resuming and enlarging upon the image which represents the Christian as being summoned to *awake out of sleep*,) *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.* These words, says Leighton, are as an alarm or morning bell, to awaken the Christian to his day’s work; as the following verse seems to remind him what that work is, viz. *to walk honestly, as in the day.* Seeing, then, that the *night* of our blindness and ignorance is *far spent*, retiring, more and more, as every true Christian

⁷ Heb. xii. 1, 2.⁸ 1 Tim. vi. 12.⁹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.¹ 2 Pet. i. 5—7, and 11.

feels, before the beams of gospel truth, and the power of divine grace; and seeing that the day of our full renovation and grace is now *at hand*, let us cast off our night-garments, and let us put on the garments of the day. Yea, seeing that we are soldiers, let us *put on the ARMOUR of light*; *armour* to help us in our conflict with sin; *armour* not only strong and useful, but comely and graceful; so that we may resemble those champions whom our old poets describe as dazzling their enemies' eyes.

And thus apparelled, *let us walk honestly as in the day*. St. Paul here exhorts us to WALK; thus reminding us that we are neither to lie down, nor to stand still, but to *walk* continually in all God's commandments and ordinances. And certain it is, brethren, that if we attempt to stand still in the path of Christian obedience, we shall immediately lose ground; certain it is, that unless we are continually pressing forward, we shall rapidly go backward, in the service of our Creator and our Redeemer.² St. Paul tells us, also, that we are to *walk HONESTLY, or decently,*³ *as in the day*: in other words; that we are to have our conversation every way suitable to our Christian profession, seeing that we are placed, as it were, upon a stage, while angels and men are fixing their eyes upon us. And even if the eyes of all these were closed, yet he, to whom the night and the day

² See also Sect. xviii. p. 160.

³ *εὐσχημένως*.

are all one in clearness, even our eternal God, he seeth our thoughts, and searcheth our hearts; he understandeth all our ways. All things lie open and uncovered unto him. He beholdeth all practices, all devices, all sin! Let us, therefore, walk uprightly, and live *honestly*, as in his sight; *not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

We may here observe how St. Paul, after exhorting to a pure, and chaste, and holy conversation, again touches upon the subject of Christian *charity*, as being inseparably connected with *purity and innocency of life*. *Not in STRIFE AND ENVYING*: as if he desired to exhibit that spirit of "envy, hatred and malice,"⁴ which always accompanies *rioting, drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness*, in marked contrast with that spirit of love, which, as being, in truth, *the FULFILLING OF THE LAW*, must always lead the Christian, to "keep himself *unspotted from the world.*"⁵

And, assuredly, my Christian brethren, did we habitually consider our high and heavenly calling, we should know what it is thus to *walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying!* Did we habitually remember that we are followers of the Lamb, we should keep our garments always white; yea, we should take *him* for our garment; we should clothe ourselves with *him*;

⁴ Litany

⁵ Jas. i. 27.

we should have our robes made of his spotless fleece; we should *put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. In these words, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, the apostle seems to say, instead of multiplying exhortations, I call upon you to *put on THE LORD JESUS CHRIST*, and thus to do the whole at once.⁴ Shew that you are, indeed, “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;”⁵ let his mind and example be reflected in your tempers and your conduct; and all who behold the several graces of your Christian conversation, your piety, your purity, your love, your self-denial, will recognize the image and the character of Christ. And then, as you will stand justified before God, in the robe of Christ’s righteousness, so will you appear before men adorned with Christ’s image for sanctification, and *not making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. You will not resemble God’s rebellious people of old, by requiring meat for your lusts, instead of soliciting bread for your necessities; you will not desire to pamper the *flesh*, as if it were your main intention to *fulfil the lusts thereof*; but you will simply provide for the health of the body, as a servant and fit instrument for the soul.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what I have here been stating to you, as apparently conveying the full meaning of the apostle’s words; and pray

⁴ Scott in loc.

⁵ Gal. iii. 26.

that *you* may so *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, as to stand justified before God, in the robe of Christ's righteousness, and adorned before men, with his image for sanctification.

1. As having been admitted, by baptism, into the covenant of grace, you are, in the first place, to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ* by faith, and to be clothed with him as your righteousness. To borrow an allusion from the history of the patriarchs, you are to come to your heavenly Father, in your elder brother's perfumed garments, and so to obtain the blessing of which he was in a manner stripped for your sakes.⁶ For he underwent the curse, and "was made a curse for us,"⁷ that we might *put him on*, as "the Lord our righteousness,"⁸ and be "made the righteousness of God in him."⁹

2. But not only are you to put him on as "the Lord your righteousness," that so you may stand justified in God's sight; you are also to put him on in the conformity of holiness; in that *sanctification of your hearts and lives*, which is the inseparable companion, and the only sure sign, of the *justification of your persons*. And this is what is chiefly intended in the passage before you. For if you attend to the construction of the verses, you will observe that the expression of *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*, bears the same relation to *putting on*

⁶ Archbishop Leighton.

⁷ Gal. iii. 13.

⁸ Jer. xxiii. 6.

⁹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

the armour of light, as the sins enumerated in the thirteenth verse, bear to the expression of the *works of darkness* which is found in the twelfth.

And it is clear, therefore, that we are to regard the phrase of *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*, as used here chiefly in opposition to *all the works of darkness*, and as denoting, more clearly and more emphatically than the phrase of *putting on the armour of light*, the necessity of exhibiting all those graces and dispositions with which the Spirit of Christ adorns the believer's soul.

Yes, brethren, the believer knows that he is to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, not only as a covering, to hide his sins from the sight of God's justice, but as his bright and beautiful attire. The believer knows, moreover, that **THEY** never *put on* Christ unto *justification*, who labour not for the graces of *sanctification*: he knows that **THEY** have not any share in the benefits of Christ's *death*, who do not tread in the blessed steps of his most holy *life*. And, knowing this, the believer makes it his daily prayer that, exposed as he is to all the suggestions of an evil heart within him, and to all the temptations of a wicked world around him, he may be continually endeavouring to increase in all spiritual graces, by continually **PUTTING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**!

SECTION XLIV.

CHAP. XIV. ver. 1—12.

MEN MAY NOT JUDGE OR DESPISE ONE THE OTHER FOR THINGS INDIFFERENT.

We have seen, as we have proceeded with this epistle, that the circumstance which most disordered the church at Rome, and which principally exercised the apostle's care in this epistle, was the pertinacity of the Jewish converts in pressing the necessity of legal observances, and in not brooking that the Gentiles, though converts to Christianity, should be admitted into their communion, without being circumcised. But, as I observed in a former section,¹ it is, at the same time, sufficiently manifest that the Gentile converts were not without fault on their side, in treating the believing Jews with disesteem and contempt; and, accordingly, in the first twelve verses of this chapter, to which I am now inviting your attention, St. Paul addresses a word of affectionate exhortation both to the Jewish and the Gentile converts; reminding them that "men may not condemn nor condemn one the other for things indifferent."² And, in the remainder of the fourteenth, as well as at the beginning of the fifteenth

¹ Section xxxiv.

² Title of the chapter.

chapter, he addresses himself more particularly to the Gentile converts, or to such of the Jews as had been set free from the prejudices of their nation, warning them against the abuse of their Christian liberty.

It may be said, therefore, that, in this part of the epistle, St. Paul passes from the consideration of things *necessary*, being things expressly commanded or forbidden of God, to things of an *indifferent* nature, being things which are not required or prohibited in the divine law, and which do not form any part of ecclesiastical polity. It was about matters of this description that there seems to have been much strife and contention at Rome, between those stronger professors of Christianity, whether among the Jewish or Gentile converts, who were persuaded of their Christian liberty, as purchased by Christ, and published by his gospel, and the more infirm and feeble Jews, who were as yet very ignorant of the nature and extent of this liberty. And our apostle, therefore, calls upon the former to have a charitable and tender concern for their weaker brethren; and he reminds the latter that they are not to judge or condemn the others for using their Christian liberty. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye*, says the apostle, *but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him*

*that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*³ It is evident, from the language which the apostle uses here, and again at the fifth verse, that some of the Jewish converts, at Rome, were of opinion that the ceremonial law as to *meats* and *days* was yet to be observed; seeing that the council at Jerusalem had allowed some of these ceremonial observances, in order to guard, as we may suppose, against any needless occasion of offence to the Jews, as long as the sacrifices continued to be offered at the temple. But the believing Gentiles, and the more advanced Jewish converts, being fully persuaded of their freedom from this yoke, and of the liberty given them by Christ, refused to hold communion with those who held such an opinion. There arose, in consequence, a dissension between them, which greatly hindered the progress of the gospel;⁴ the weak censuring the strong as profane, for using such a liberty, and the strong despising the weak, as over-scrupulous in not using it. Our apostle, therefore, pursuing that middle course which best ensures the exercise of mutual charity, admonishes the weaker

³ Ver 1—4.

⁴ Acerbis altercationibus veritas saepe, charitas certo amittitur.

brethren so to follow their own opinion as not to condemn those who were otherwise persuaded, while he calls upon the stronger professors not to despise such of the believing Jews as still adhered to some of these ceremonial observances.

It is to the stronger professors that St. Paul addresses the words with which the chapter opens, saying, *Him that is thus weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.* That is, do not receive him to all the various *ambiguities* of disputations, lest he should depart more uncertain than he came, through endless and perplexing controversies, or lest he should turn aside with a disturbed conscience; but instruct him, gradually, with all mildness and lenity, and, in things indifferent, accommodate yourselves to his weakness, from regard to the law of charity. If, however, we follow the interpretation of the latter clause, which is given in the margin, viz. *not to judge his doubtful thoughts*,⁵ we must suppose the apostle to say to the believing Gentiles; Receive the Jewish convert into your fellowship, and do not take upon you to judge his thoughts, whether he uses those things as necessary, or as things only profitable for the time.

The first instance of things indifferent which the apostle adduces, is that of *meats*; the believing Gentiles, together with several of the Jewish converts, believing that they might freely eat all

⁵ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν

things, while others who were weak, rather than eat any meats forbidden under the law, contented themselves only with *herbs*. Now, as St. Paul goes on to say, *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth.* And, having thus warned them not to censure one another in using, or abstaining from, things which are indifferent under the gospel dispensation, St. Paul enforces his exhortation by these three arguments; first, because God has not rejected either of them, but has called the one, as well as the other, to the knowledge and the belief of his Son, and has so *received* them into his family; secondly, because they are both *servants* of one master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath “bought them with a price;”⁶ and, thirdly, because God is *able*, on the one hand, to save any one of his people from falling, or, on the other hand, to make him strong who is weak.

And the case is similar, as the apostle seems to say, with regard to the other point which is a subject of dissension between the Jewish and the Gentile converts, viz. the observance of *days*. For *one man*, as he continues, *esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth,*

⁶ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

*eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*⁷ The apostle is evidently referring, in these verses, not to the Christian, but to the Jewish sabbaths. He is here referring, also, to the “new moons,”⁸ and other solemnities, which some of the Jewish converts regarded as still in force, while other converts were satisfied that the ritual law was entirely abrogated, and that these appointments were no longer obligatory ; so that, in this respect, they *esteemed every day alike*. *Let every man*, says the apostle, *be fully persuaded in his own mind* : that is ; let every man among you be *fully satisfied or assured*⁹ in his own mind, that he is actuated by a proper motive ; desiring only to serve and to please God, and to be guided and assisted by the Holy Spirit, which, whether the Christian pursues his voyage through a narrower or a wider channel, is the breath which fills his sails, and carries him steadily on his course. Yea, let every man among you be labouring to attain this singleness of purpose, which enables the believer to advance, with unfaltering steps, amidst all the doubts and the difficulties which surround him ; and then I may say of him that *regardeth the day*, that he *regardeth it unto the Lord* ; and of him that *regardeth not the day*, that *to the Lord he doth not regard it*. And, in like manner, upon the supposition of your labouring to attain this *full assur-*

⁷ Ver. 5, 6.⁸ See Col. ii. 16, 17.⁹ πληροφροεῖσθε.

once as to the purity and integrity of your motives, I may say of him that *eateth*, that *he eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks*; and of him that *eateth not*, that *to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks*.

For, as the apostle goes on to say, *none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*¹ In these verses St. Paul draws a powerful and very important conclusion from what he had said in the fourth verse, shewing that since Christians are the servants of one common Lord, they ought not to judge or despise one another, but should deem it their sacred and bounden duty to seek the glory of their Lord in all their thoughts, words, and actions. St. Paul, moreover, here reminds all believers that they have a Lord, who taketh more care of them in life and death, than they could do of themselves; seeing that he is both *able* and *willing* to preserve them during their life, and, after death, to restore them to a never-dying life. Do we desire to be assured of his *ability* to thus bless us in life or in death? The apostle reminds us that Christ *died, and rose, and revived*; thus making express mention of his *resurrection*, as the proof

¹ Ver. 7—9.

which he had given of his having indeed overcome death. And do we desire to be assured of his *willingness* thus to bless his believing people? The apostle reminds us how FOR THIS VERY END *Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.* Yes, brethren, he died, that he might pay the ransom for a guilty world; and he rose again, that he might be “the head over all things to the church,”² and that he might reign for ever over his redeemed people. When our apostle adds, *Lord both of the DEAD AND LIVING*, is it not here written, as with a sunbeam, that the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection reaches back to believers both before and under the law, making them all members of that one mystical body, of which he is the head? And is it not a blessed truth, that those who are now living under the gospel dispensation, as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,”³ are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” while they are “running with patience the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith?”⁴

But this is not all. In the passage before us, believers are taught to “look to Jesus,” not only as “the head over all things to the church,” and as the fountain of all grace and consolation, but as being appointed to come hereafter, in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead.

Eph. i. 22.

² Heb. xi. 13.³ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

Feeling the importance of this solemn truth, St. Paul now appeals both to his stronger and weaker brethren at Rome, and says, *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*⁵ The words here quoted by the apostle, are found in the forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah; and it is plain, from the manner in which St. Paul here applies them to Christ, that he is, of a truth, the everlasting and mighty Jehovah, to whom the people of God are exhorted to flee for salvation and for succour. Yea, it is plain, that he is that supreme Judge, unto whom all knees must bow, in token of subjection, and before whose tribunal all must appear, being either willingly constrained, or unwillingly compelled, to confess him to be the very true God, and the sovereign Lord both of angels and men!

And what an argument is here before us, to withhold us from *judging or despising one another*, viz. that we are ALL to *stand before the judgment seat of Christ*, and that EVERY ONE OF US shall *give account of himself to God*! Is it indeed true that *every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to HIM*, who is the Lord both of the dead and the

⁵ Ver. 10—12.

⁶ Is. xlv. 23.

Living, and who is to come, therefore, in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead? And shall we, then, by passing judgment upon our brethren, dare to usurp his office, and thus virtually to demand that *every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to ourselves?* Is it indeed true, that he who *died, and rose, and revived*, shall come again, as our judge, to give to every man according to his works? And can we, then, be so utterly regardless of this important truth, as to occupy ourselves, day after day, in judging and condemning our brethren, only because we cannot bring them to see with our own eyes in every thing, instead of desiring, day by day, and hour by hour, to prepare ourselves for the strict and solemn account which *every one of us must give*, of every thought, word, and action, when we shall *all stand before the judgment seat of Christ?* Surely we ought to regard it as one of the worst suggestions of the evil one, when we are tempted thus to turn our eyes toward the persons and the ways of others, either to judge or to despise them, instead of making it our daily and hourly prayer, that, when the Son of man “cometh” we may be found with our “loins girded about, and our lights burning, like unto men that wait for their Lord.”⁷

Deeply impressed with the importance of the subject now before us, I would, before I pass on

⁷ See Luke xii. 35—37.

to the next section, ask you, in the first place, to dwell on the spirit of charity which is here exhibited and inculcated by the apostle; secondly, to consider, with regard to things indifferent, that these are matters concerning which a judgment can only be pronounced by him who searcheth the hearts; and thirdly, to consider that, in proportion as you are experimentally acquainted with the things which belong to Christ, you will be brought nearer and nearer one to another.

1. Dwell, in the first place, on the spirit of charity which is here exhibited and inculcated by the apostle. While he endeavours, to shew professed Christians what they ought to be and to do, by stating the character and the aims of true believers, he emphatically reminds the latter that they are to think and to speak with charity, respecting such as differ from them in minor things, provided only that their general conduct be consistent with their Christian profession. With regard to all such, the apostle expressly says that *God has received them*, and that they shall be *holden up*, seeing that *God is able to make them stand*. Again, with regard to a brother who *regardeth*, or who *regardeth not*, one day above another, the apostle charitably concludes, that he *regardeth it*, or *regardeth it not, unto the Lord*. For as he adds, speaking of all professed believers, in that spirit of enlarged charity, which “be-

loveth" and "hopeth all things,"⁸ none of us dieth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. And is not this the very spirit which we should continually exercise toward all those who join with us in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, as a common Saviour and Lord, though they may differ from us in many of those minor things which are not expressly determined in the word of God, or which do not form any part of our church polity? Should we not charitably hope of all such, that *God hath received them*? Should we not regard all our brethren, as "very members incorporate in that mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people,"⁹ if, in their general life and conversation, they give evidence of their effectual calling? Should we not deem ourselves called upon to speak and to think charitably, as far as we may do so with truth and reason, of them and their actions; regarding them all, not only as *men*, partaking, together with ourselves, of the same common nature, but as *Christians*, partaking, together with ourselves, of the same heavenly grace?¹

2. Consider, secondly, that concerning the mat-

⁸ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

⁹ Collect in the Post-communion.

¹ See also remarks in Sect. 1.

ters of which St. Paul is here treating, a judgment can only be pronounced by Him who searcheth men's hearts. It is evident, with regard to things which are, in their own nature, *indifferent*, being things which are, in their own nature, neither good nor evil, that it must be the intention of the doer, which gives the character to the action. Now of this inward intention, God alone is the discernor, seeing that he is the only searcher of all hearts; and it follows, therefore, that we ought to abstain from judging, lest we be found to usurp the office of Him, to whom "all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."²

3. Consider, lastly, that in proportion as you really know the things which belong to Christ, you will be brought nearer and nearer one to another. In the passage before us, the apostle gives a warning both to those who *despise*, and to those who *condemn*, their brethren. In the *former*, you behold those stronger professors, who knew the liberty which the gospel allowed them in things indifferent, despising and deriding all who were not yet prepared to admit the abolition of the legal and Levitical rites. And do you not learn from hence, brethren, that knowledge separated from love is dangerous? It is the declaration of our apostle elsewhere, that "knowledge *puffeth up*;"³ and all experience shews, that where the knowledge of divine things is wholly or chiefly

² Collect in the Ante-communion.

³ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

a head-knowledge, spiritual pride is always endeavouring to creep in, and to make us account as nothing all who do not, in all points, speak, and think, and act as we ourselves do. In the *latter*, you behold those weaker brethren, who deemed themselves still bound to observe the ceremonial ordinances with regard to meats and days, judging and condemning all who exercised their Christian liberty in these respects. And as you consider the case of these persons, may you not learn this important truth, viz. that a blind partiality to our own particular prejudices, will always tend to close the eyes against the admission of that clearer light which beams in every page of the gospel, and which will assuredly burst upon all who approach, with unbiassed minds, the study of the sacred oracles?

In each of the above cases, the persons of whom the apostle speaks, are plainly described as setting up their own particular views as the standard of truth, and as desiring, by doubtful and eager disputations, to bring men to see with their own eyes. Now it is against this partial and intolerant spirit, whether on the one side or the other, that the apostle desires to guard the Roman converts; and how important is the lesson which his language inculcates upon Christians, in every age of the world! It reminds us, that since we are not our own, but Christ's; since we are his disciples and his subjects; *his will* ought to be the rule of our consci-

ence and our conduct. And if we are here plainly taught that we ought not to make *our own wills* and sentiments a rule to *ourselves*, is it not still more manifest that we ought not to make them a rule to *others*; as if they were to live to *us*, or, like servants, to *pay us obedience*?

Such is the manner in which our apostle would persuade us to be one with Christ, and in him one with another; and sure I am, my Christian brethren, that the more we know what it is thus to seek “not our own, but the things which are Jesus Christ’s,”⁴ the more nearly shall we learn to approach each other in unity of judgment and affection. For, little as we may suspect it ourselves, it is pride, in one shape or another, which produces all our divisions, and which makes us contend for our own favourite views with as much eagerness as if every knee were to bow, and every tongue were to confess to ourselves! Let the love of Christ absorb every other feeling, and we may rest assured that, instead of thus tearing asunder, with an angry and contentious spirit, the seamless robe of Christian peace, we shall rejoice in regarding each other as fellow-members of that mystical body of which Christ is the head! Let the love of Christ alone rule and direct our hearts; and we may rest assured that, as we grow in years, we shall meet more and more upon one common ground; rejoicing to think that we are now ele-

⁴ Phil. ii. 21.

vated above that dust of controversy which has hitherto made us lose sight of the eternal city ; desiring mutually to concede to each other in things indifferent ; and praying, one for another, that, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we may all habitually remember this solemn and important truth, viz. that *none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's !*

SECTION XLV.

CHAP. xiv. ver. 13—23.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT MEAT AND DRINK, BUT
 RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY
 GHOST.

It has been truly said, that the most frequent error, respecting the nature of religion, has consisted, not so much in proposing something which is essentially contrary to it, as in selecting a part of it, and substituting that part for the whole. There must be something plausible, something resem-

bling the truth, in every error which is long and widely received. And it is, therefore, by fixing upon a *part* only, and, frequently, a *very small part* of religion, and by magnifying its importance till the rest shall appear of little account, that a foundation is laid, on which this fabric of error may rest.

Thus, in the case before us, the Jewish believers had always been accustomed to form an undue estimate of the importance of those ceremonial observances, which had indeed been ordained by God himself, but which, even during the continuance of the Levitical dispensation, constituted a part only of true religion, and which were entirely done away in Christ. They confounded the means with the end; not considering that all ceremonies are useful only as promoting some further object, and that the end itself must be more important than the means by which it is pursued. And, on the other hand, the believing Gentiles, together with such of the Jewish converts as had been set free from the prejudices of their nation, were obviously to be charged with entertaining narrow and defective views of religion. For by exercising their Christian liberty, which was good and valuable in itself, in an unguarded and uncharitable manner, they evidently laid as undue a stress on the indulgence allowed under the new, as many of the Jewish converts did on the ceremonial distinctions of the old dispensation.

But, whether we look to its privileges or require-

ments, it still remains true that *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; and, accordingly, in the portion of the fourteenth chapter, which now remains to be considered, as well as at the beginning of the fifteenth chapter, St. Paul addresses himself chiefly to the converts who had thus abused their Christian liberty, reminding them that we are not to deprive the Christian faith of its form and comeliness, by substituting a part, however excellent that part may be, for the whole of this divine and glorious system. For it is, as he seems to say to them, a system which is in constant progress to perfection; being at once the *resemblance* of that better state above, and a *continued preparation* for it.¹

Following up the declaration contained in the twelfth verse, viz. that *every one of us shall give account of himself to God*, the apostle now says, *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of*² The apos-

¹ Venn's Sermons.² Ver 13—16.

tle here admits, in the strongest terms, that *nothing is common*³ or *unclean of itself*; but he reminds those who advocate an unrestricted use of their Christian liberty, that *to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*. “Nothing,” says the good Bishop Hall,⁴ “is, in its own nature, *unclean*; for God made all things good; but, in a man’s conceit and opinion, some creatures seem unclean; and while a man is in that mind, surely that creature is unclean to him, because his conscience riseth up against the use thereof.” And how beautifully does the apostle add; *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably*. This, then, is the first argument which the apostle employs to dissuade us from *grieving* our brother and “making him to offend;”⁵ viz. that such conduct is against the rule of Christian charity. St. Paul’s second argument, is the injury which we may inflict on our weaker brother, who has been induced, by our example and influence, to do that against which his conscience protests. As far as in you lies, says the apostle, (and the language which he employs in this verse plainly shews that we are bound to regard every professed Christian as the object of redeeming love,) *destroy not him with thy meat, for whom CHRIST DIED*. And the third argument, is the reproach to which our Christian liberty will thus

³ κοινον.⁴ Bishop Hall in loc.⁵ 1 Cor. viii. 13.

be exposed. *Let not then your good be evil spoken of*: that is; let not that *good liberty*, which the gospel hath given you in these indifferent things, *be evil spoken of*, through your careless use of it. In other words, deem it not enough that you are doing that which is, in itself, allowable and good, but consider also the consequences which may attend it, and be careful so to regulate your conduct, that *your good* may be inoffensive and irreproachable.

St. Paul inculcates the same indispensable union between Christian liberty and Christian charity, in his first epistle to the Corinthians,⁶ where we find him saying, in language which admirably illustrates and enforces the passage before us, "meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. And," as the apostle continues, in language, which plainly extends the offer of redemption to all professed Christians, "through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, *for whom Christ died?* But when ye so sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." And again, in his epistle to the Gala-

⁶ See 1 Cor. viii. 8, 9, and 11--13.

tians, he sums up the whole argument in these few, but comprehensive words: "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, *but by love serve one another.*"⁷ Let us beware, then, lest, under the specious name of liberty, we practise something which does not belong to it. Let us not make it a "cloak of maliciousness;"⁸ for it is far too precious a garment for so base a use. "Liberty is indeed Christ's livery, which he gives to all his followers. But to live suitably to it is, to live, not in disobedience of any kind, but in all obedience, holiness, and love. We are called to be 'the servants of God, and that is at once our dignity and our liberty.'"⁹

But, to proceed with the passage before us, St. Paul now employs another argument, which grows out of the other three, and which may be regarded as the sum and substance of them all, in order to dissuade the Gentile converts at Rome from the abuse of their Christian liberty. *For the kingdom of God, he says, is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For, as he continues, (evidently contrasting the service of Christ with the abuse of our Christian liberty,) he that in these things SERVETH CHRIST, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make*

⁷ Gal. v. 13.⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 16.⁹ Archbishop Leighton.

*For peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*¹

Behold, my Christian brethren, in the words of the seventeenth verse, a complete representation of the *privileges* and the *duties* of the *kingdom of God*.² The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. To stand justified before God; to possess that peace in the heart and conscience which follows our acceptance with him; and to experience that pure joy which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in every believer's heart; these are the great *privileges* of the *kingdom of God*. And, on the other hand, to walk with God as with a reconciled father, by faith, in righteousness and true holiness; to cultivate peace with all our brethren; and to rise above all our trials by the *joy of the Holy Ghost*; these are the solemn and important *requirements* of the *kingdom of God*.

He that in these things serveth Christ, as the apostle adds, *is acceptable to God, and approved of men*. St. Paul does not say, *he that by these things serveth Christ*, as if we could hope to merit by any or all of these things, which are purely the effects of divine grace, but *he that in these things*

¹ Ver. 17—21.

² Scott in loc.

serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. And do we not gather from these words, brethren, that he is not the servant of Christ, who, on the one hand, pleaseth men rather than God, or who, on the other hand, pleaseth God without all care of men? The believer desires, that, first of all, he may be *acceptable to God*; and he desires that, afterwards, and for the sake of God, he may be *approved of men*.

Having mentioned *peace* as one of the properties of the *kingdom of God*, St. Paul, in the nineteenth verse, again draws our attention to this point, as bearing more immediately upon the subject of the present chapter, and says, *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace*: that is, let us cultivate all those heavenly graces which are either the parents to breed, or the nurses to foster, *peace*; studying a holy indifference about the most lawful earthly enjoyments, and learning to renounce whatever comes in competition with the *peace* of the church, and the welfare of our brethren. I say, *the welfare of our brethren*, because the apostle reminds us, in the latter clause of the verse, that the *peace* which we are to cherish is an *edifying peace*. As, in one scripture,³ we find *peace* joined with *truth*, and, in another,⁴ with *holiness*; so here we find it coupled with *the things wherewith one may EDIFY another*. Thus plainly does the word of God mark out the *bounds*

³ Zech. viii. 16.

⁴ Heb. xii. 14.

of peace, which we may not pass ; teaching us that the *peace* which we are to cultivate, must be in perfect consistency with *truth*, and *holiness*, and *edification* ; in other words, that it must be an *edifying*, and not a *destroying peace*.

It has been well observed,⁵ also, that the apostle here separates, as it were, *peace and liberty*, that he may join *peace and charity*. For, in our services to the church of God, we must evermore look to what is *helpful to others*, rather than to what is *lawful for ourselves* ; and we must always be prepared to part with a little of our own ground, rather than that our brother's house should remain unbuilt.

With this *edifying peace*, which Christians are commanded to follow, St. Paul finely contrasts, in the twentieth verse, that *destroying contention*, which Christians are commanded to avoid. *For meat destroy not the work of God* : that is, for meat, which is one of the *lowest*, destroy not that which is one of the *highest*, of all objects, and which may most emphatically be called *the work of God*, viz. the work of *peace* in the Christian church, and the work of *edification* in the believer's soul.

All things indeed, as the apostle again admits, *are pure* ; pure in their own nature and by God's ordinance ; *but it is evil to that man who eateth with offence* ; it is evil to him who, by eating,

⁵ Bishop Reynolds.

gives offence to such as are weak : so that *it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended; or is made weak.* For if the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, we ought to beware lest we endanger our brother's *righteousness*, by causing him to *stumble*, through his being drawn to do that, of the lawfulness of which he is not fully persuaded ; or lest we endanger his *peace*, by causing him to be *offended*, or grieved and pained at our conduct ; or lest we endanger his *joy*, by filling him with those doubts and discouragements which *weaken* and perplex the soul.

The chapter now concludes with an answer to an objection which might still be urged on the part of the stronger professor ; and with a few short rules for guiding both the strong and the weak in the use of things indifferent.

*Hast thou faith ? have it to thyself before God.*⁶ The apostle here supposes the stronger brother to say ; I am fully persuaded of the lawfulness of these things ; and why, therefore, may I not freely make use of them ? *Hast thou such faith, or persuasion ?* answers the apostle ; *have it to THYSELF before God* : but know that thou must walk with respect to *others* by the rule of charity. Thy charity, therefore, is for *others* ; thy faith, or persuasion, is for *thyself*. It is evident that by *faith*,

⁶ Ver. 22.

as here used by the apostle, we are to understand that *full persuasion* of the mind, of which he speaks in the fifth verse; and, accordingly, Chrysostom, in commenting upon this passage, says, that the apostle is to be understood as speaking here not of the *faith of doctrine*, but of that which belongs to the argument in hand, viz. the *faith or persuasion about things indifferent*. Touching the former description of faith, it is written, that while *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; with the MOUTH CONFESSION IS TO BE MADE unto salvation*; ⁷ and it follows, therefore, says Chrysostom, that such faith is *oppressed*, if it be not *expressed*. But, on the contrary, this faith or persuasion about things indifferent is then perverted, when it is unseasonably and hurtfully avowed.

Happy, as the apostle adds, (concluding, as I have said, with three short rules for guiding both the strong and the weak in the use of things indifferent,) *happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* ⁸ Happy is that man, says the apostle, (speaking, first, of the stronger brother,) who, with the word of God for his guide, is so fully settled and persuaded in his own mind, that he is free from all

⁷ Chap. x 10.⁸ Ver. 22, 23.

doubt and self-condemnation, in those things which he *allows* himself to do. *And he that doubteth*, says the apostle, (speaking of the weaker brother,) *is damned if he eat*, because his conscience is unsettled; and he eateth sinfully, therefore, because he eateth doubtfully. For, as the apostle says, in the last place, (speaking both of the strong and weak brethren,) *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*: that is, whosoever shall do any thing which he verily believes to be unlawful, or of the lawfulness of which, as far as he has been able to inform his judgment, he is not well persuaded, to him it is *sin*; seeing that he is guilty of preferring his own inclinations to the dictates of his conscience, and to what he believes to be the will and good pleasure of his God.

We have seen, brethren, in this and the preceding section, how indispensable it is that, in matters of Christian liberty, we should pay the greatest deference to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others; and now, as I close the present section, I would desire to follow up what I have said with this word of solemn admonition; viz. that, in matters essential to religion, there is no room whatever for compliance, but that, through evil report and good report, we must follow on to know the Lord; that so we may abound, more and more, *in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!*

I have said that these words contain a representation of the *privileges* and the *duties* of the *kingdom of God*; and I would now observe, in conclusion, that they are admirably suited to guard us against any abuse of the subjects brought before us in the present chapter. For it is here plainly declared to us that the *peace*, which St. Paul invites us to cultivate, is not that false and hollow peace which is the child of indifference and unbelief, but that pure and solid and lasting *peace*, which rests upon the basis of Christian *righteousness*. Learn, therefore, to value that *righteousness*, which Christ has wrought for us by his death, and to walk in that *righteousness*, which he works in us by his Spirit; and while, in all matters essential to your salvation, you will continually be endeavouring to aim at a higher standard of purity and holiness, you will, in all things of an indifferent nature, manifest a spirit of tenderness and forbearance to those around you. In one word, aim at the *righteousness* which the gospel enjoins; aim at that devotedness to God, which the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of all who are justified by faith in Christ; and, in proportion as you shall thus learn to live, not to yourselves, but to him who has redeemed you with his own most precious blood, you will be enabled, through divine grace, to subdue all those sinful passions which are the great disturbers of *peace*, and you will know what it is to abound, more and more, in

that *joy of the Holy Ghost*, which is indeed “joy unspeakable and full of glory!”⁹

SECTION XLVI.

CHAPTER XV. ver. 1—13.

CHRISTIANS TO RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS CHRIST RECEIVED BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES.

Our apostle, still proceeding with his exhortation to the stronger brethren at Rome, now adopts a more general line of argument, calling upon them, in the portion selected for this section, not only to avoid giving offence to their weaker brethren by the untimely use of things indifferent, but to *receive* them, and to render them the offices of Christian kindness, in all those things wherein they may require support, after the example of Christ, who, out of his unutterable love, *received* both Jews and Gentiles.

We then that are strong, says St. Paul, *ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written,*

⁹ 1 Pet. i 8.

*The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*¹

In the first clause of the above passage, as also in the parallel passage in his epistle to the Galatians,² in which we are exhorted to “bear one another’s burthens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ,” the apostle represents Christians as travelling together in a company; and he reminds us that those who are strong and healthy ought to pay peculiar attention to the sick and feeble among their fellow-travellers, carrying their burthens for them, and inviting them to lean upon their arms. Let us *not please ourselves*, then, but *let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ*, who is indeed the “mighty and the strong one,”³ *pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*⁴ These words are quoted from the sixty-ninth Psalm, which is twice applied to Christ in the Gospel of St. John,⁵ and respecting which the Jews themselves affirm, that the things therein contained will be accomplished in the days of the Messiah. And what an argument do these words supply for inducing the stronger brethren patiently and tenderly to *bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves!* For, as we may well ask, what comparison can be made between the attainments of the strongest Christians above the

¹ Ver. 1—3.

² Gal. vi. 2.

³ See Is. xxviii. 2.

⁴ Ps. lxxix. 9.

⁵ John ii. 17; and xix. 28.

weakest, and the perfections of Christ above the strongest? Or what account shall we make even of the most bitter and the most unjust reproaches between man and man, when we consider the “contradiction of sinners” which the holy Jesus “endured against himself?”⁶

St. Paul now takes occasion, from the preceding quotation, to remind the Christians at Rome, that the whole of the ancient Scriptures, whether they contained types and predictions of Christ, or words of admonition or encouragement, had been written for their instruction, as much as for the instruction of those to whom they were first delivered. *For, as he goes on to say, whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*⁷ Here, then, is the test by which you may ascertain, brethren, whether you have received the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, as *written for your learning*. Do you know what it is to walk in PATIENCE, in COMFORT, and in HOPE? It may be truly said that the Scriptures speak every where of PATIENCE, seeing that they every where speak of him who *pleased not himself*, and of whom it is written, that though he was “oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;” yea, that “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his

⁶ Heb. xii. 3.

⁷ Ver. 4.

mouth."⁸ And when the apostle says, *that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*, he follows the very order which I pointed out at the beginning of the fifth chapter,⁹ where he tells us that *patience worketh experience, and experience hope*. Yes, brethren, they who, at the feet of the meek and lowly Jesus, and under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, have learned the lessons of *patience, forbearance, and long-suffering*, have that sweet *experience* of the love of Christ, which is only another name for the *comfort of the Scriptures*. And exactly in proportion as believers taste and see the fulness and the sweetness of the divine consolations, will they learn to *rejoice in HOPE of the glory of God*.¹ To borrow the striking language of Bishop Sanderson,² "It is the devil's method to set the fairer side forwards; serving the best wine first, and afterwards that which is worse. He will not much put us upon the trial of our patience at first. He chooses rather to hold out semblances and promises of I know not what comforts and contentments; but when once he hath us fast, then he turneth in woe and misery upon us, as a deluge, to overwhelm us. But God, in his dispensations, useth commonly a quite contrary method, and dealeth roughest with us at the first. We hear of little else from him than self-denial; hatred of the world; taking

⁸ Is. lxi. 7.⁹ Chap. v. 4.¹ Chap. v. 2.² Sermon on Rom. xv. 5.

up the cross, and suffering persecution ; exercise enough for all the *patience* we can get. But then, if we hold out stoutly to the end, at last cometh joy and comfort, flowing in upon us both seasonably and plentifully, like a river. ‘ Ye have need of *patience*,’³ says the apostle, ‘ that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.’”

I would observe, also, that there seems to be a peculiar fitness in the mention which is here made of *patience* and *comfort*, when viewed in connexion with that unity of heart and affection which St. Paul is here studying to inculcate ; and this naturally leads me to the prayer which follows in the fifth and sixth verses. *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus : that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁴

Dwell, first, upon the title which St. Paul gives to God at the commencement of the prayer, Having, in the preceding verse, spoken of *patience*, and of the *comfort* or *consolation* of the Scriptures, our apostle here entitles God, the *God of patience and consolation*, to shew that the *patience* and the *consolation* on which the Scriptures expatiate, proceed from God. We find, moreover, that in the prayers recorded in the Bible, such titles and attributes are usually given to God, in the prefaces of those prayers, as best accord with the subject-

³ Heb. x. 36.

⁴ Ver. 5, 6.

matter of the petitions. And, accordingly, in this prayer for Christian unity, St. Paul addresses God as the *God of patience and consolation*; of PATIENCE, one of the first and most important preparations for such unity; and of CONSOLATION, one of its special fruits and effects.

Consider, secondly, the connexion in which this prayer is found. It is immediately after speaking of those *scriptures*, which were *written for our learning*, that the apostle says; *Now God grant you to be likeminded one toward another*. And his words seem to admit, therefore, of the following paraphrase: "I have been endeavouring, as far as in me lies, so to instruct you in the scriptures, that you may all be brought to be of one mind and of one heart. I have thus endeavoured to plant unity among you by my doctrine, and I have watered it with my exhortations. And what now remains, but that I second my *labours* with my *prayers*? What now remains, but that I commend what I have planted and watered to the care and the blessing of Him, who only is able to give the increase? I have shewn you what you are to do: *now the God of patience and consolation* grant that it MAY BE DONE!" And should not these words of the apostle remind the ministers of the gospel, that while they are diligently employed in instructing their hearers in what they are to do, in reproving them when they have done amiss, or in encouraging them when they have done well, they must be careful to combine with

all this, faithful and fervent prayers in their behalf? “In vain,” says Bishop Sanderson, “shall you wrestle with their stubbornness, and other corruptions, though you put forth all your strength, and ‘wrestle with great wrestling,’⁵ as long as you do but wrestle with them only; for so long you wrestle but with flesh and blood; and, alas! what great matters can be done thereby? Then, or not at all, shall you wrestle to purpose, when you enter the lists, as Jacob did, with *the ‘Father of spirits himself;’*⁶ wrestling with him by your importunate prayers, and not giving him over, till you have wrung a blessing from him, either for *yourselves*, or for *them*, or for *both*. For when you have done what you can, the blessing must come from HIM, or it will never come!”

Consider, thirdly, how St. Paul here prays for Christians, that they may be *likeminded one toward another* ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS: *that they may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The words, *according to Christ Jesus*, are capable of a double interpretation. Some understand them as qualifying and limiting the unity for which the apostle is praying. He prays for believers that they may be *likeminded one toward another*; but by the addition of the clause, *according to Christ Jesus*, he may be understood to declare that it is not such an unity as he desires, unless it be *according to truth and godliness*⁷ in Christ Jesus. But the

⁵ Gen. xxx. 8.⁶ Heb. xii. 9.⁷ See Titus i. 1.

larger body of Expositors understand the original words as denoting, *after the example of Christ*; and this was evidently regarded by our translators as the probable interpretation of the words.^a The apostle has already referred to the example of Christ in the third verse, and he refers to it again in the seventh verse, as one of the weightiest and most effectual arguments for Christian unity; and supposing, therefore, that in the prayer before us, he has the same example still in view, we may understand him to say; “Christ sought not himself, but us. He laid aside his own glory, that he might condescend to our low estate, and bear our infirmities. He did not despise us, but received us with all meekness and compassion. Let us not, therefore, seek every man to *please himself*, in following his own way, and in setting up his own will; neither let us despise any man’s weakness; but rather, treading in the steps of our Lord, *let every one of us strive to please his neighbour for his good to edification*, and let us bear with the infirmities of our weaker brethren, receiving one another into our bosoms and affections, *even as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*”

I have here anticipated the course of the apostle’s argument; for, as we proceed with the passage before us, we find him thus enforcing his exhortation to Christian unity, from the example of Christ

^a See marginal reading

in receiving both Jews and Gentiles. *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.*⁸ And again he saith, *Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.*⁹ And again, *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.*¹ And again, *Esaias saith,*² *There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*³ When St. Paul speaks of Christ in the eighth verse, as receiving the Jews, he calls him the MINISTER of the circumcision, that is, the minister of the circumcised Jews; but, when speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, he does not repeat the above expression, because Christ had “ascended on high,” as a mighty conqueror, “leading captivity captive,”⁴ before the message of salvation was proclaimed to the heathen world. Again, when referring to the case of the Jews, St. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as a *minister of the circumcision*, FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; that so God might appear to be true in his promises, made to the fathers, with re-

⁸ Ps. xviii. 49.

Is. xi. 1 and 10.

⁹ Deut. xxxii. 43.³ Ver. 7—12.¹ Ps. cxvii. 1.⁴ Ps. lxxviii. 18.

gard to sending the Messiah. But, when speaking of the Gentiles, he says, that they were to *glorify God for his MERCY*; thus emphatically reminding the Gentile converts, that they were the more especially bound to magnify the *mercy* of God, seeing that they enjoyed the blessed fruits of it, though they had hitherto been strangers to the promises. It is evident, as I would observe in the next place, that these four quotations out of the Old Testament, of which the Jews always applied the first and the last to the Messiah, were admirably suited to impress upon the Jewish converts the duty of cherishing a cordial unity of judgment and affection with the believing Gentiles. And before I proceed to the thirteenth verse, I would add, with respect to the passage from Isaiah, that, in the Hebrew,⁵ the promised Messiah is described first as a “root of Jesse,” and then as “standing for an ensign to the people;”⁶ a gradation of terms which seems emphatically to declare to us, that the “branch”⁷ who was to grow out of the root of Jesse, should afterwards be lifted up so high, that even the remotest Gentiles should behold this *ENSIGN of the nations!*

The apostle had just said, of him who was thus to *reign over the Gentiles*, that *in him should the Gentiles trust, or hope*; and now, therefore, taking up the last word of the preceding clause,⁸ he ad-

⁵ St. Paul's quotation is from the Septuagint.

⁶ Is. xl. 10.

⁷ Is. xl. 1.

⁸ Compare ver. 4 and 5.

dresses God as the *God of hope*, and seals up his exhortation with this affecting prayer: *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* ⁹

In the words of this prayer, with which he closes his argument for Christian unity, St. Paul plainly refers to his declaration in the fourteenth chapter, viz. *that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* ¹ For he speaks, in this prayer, of *all joy and peace in BELIEVING*: in other words, he speaks of FAITH as the parent of *joy and peace*. And what is FAITH, brethren? Is it not that heavenly grace which, by leading us to Christ, points to him, the “*LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,*” ² who by his Spirit, enables us to walk before God in *righteousness*, as well as in *joy*, and in *peace*? And may we not say, therefore, that, in praying for us, that we may be *filled with all joy and peace in believing*, the apostle prays, in effect, that we may have grace to become subjects of that *kingdom of God, which consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*?

Observe also, in the second place, how the apostle prays, for Christians, that they may be FILLED *with all joy and peace in believing, that so they may ABOUND in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*; thus strongly declaring to them,

⁹ Ver. 13.

¹ Chap. xiv. 17.

² Jer. xxiii. 6.

that they must continually labour after the largest measures of faith, and holiness, and peace, and joy, never contenting themselves with a *portion* of these heavenly graces, but desiring always to be FILLED, and to ABOUND. “Yes, as covetous men never think they have gold enough, so let God’s child never think he hath graces enough. For he is bound to wax spiritually, as plants and young children wax naturally. And the more grace he hath, the more and the better service shall he do to his God.”³

I would observe, lastly, that whereas in the fourteenth chapter, the apostle speaks of *righteousness, and peace, and joy*, he here changes the order of the words, and says, *joy and peace*; as if he desired to close his argument for Christian unity, with the mild accents of PEACE; under the sweet persuasion that, in whatever degree Christians shall *follow after the things which make for PEACE*,⁴ in the same degree will they *abound in JOY and HOPE through the power of the Holy Ghost*!

³ T. Wilson in loc.

⁴ Chap. xiv. 19.

SECTION XLVII.

CHAP. XV. ver. 14—33.

THE APOSTLE SPEAKS OF HIS LABOURS AMONG THE GENTILES, AND ASKS FOR THE PRAYERS OF THE BRETHREN AT ROME.

Our apostle, being now about to conclude his epistle, shews the Roman converts on what grounds he, who had not seen them, had been induced to address them in so earnest and so copious a manner. And this apology for writing to a church, with the members of which he was not personally acquainted, was the more necessary, because in his letter he had opposed some of their strongest prejudices, and had rebuked them for certain irregularities in their conduct. St. Paul, therefore, proceeds to speak of his office as the *apostle of the Gentiles*.

He had said of the Roman converts, in the first chapter, that *their faith was spoken of throughout the world*;¹ and now, adding his own testimony to the testimony of others, he goes on to say, *And I*

¹ Chap i. 8.

*myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*²

St. Paul was persuaded that the Roman converts were able to admonish one another, because he was persuaded that they were full of goodness, and filled with all knowledge. It is plain, then, that both goodness and knowledge are required for the work of Christian admonition. Without the one, we shall not feel disposed, and without the other, we shall not be qualified, to instruct and admonish our neighbour. St. Paul says, also, *FULL of goodness, and FILLED with all knowledge*;³ as if he would remind us that it is not a small measure of the one or of the other which will serve for this important purpose. And, accordingly, when he writes to the Colossians, he tells them that the “word of Christ must dwell in them *richly in all wisdom*,” before they can be prepared to “teach and admonish one another.”⁴

Being thus persuaded with respect to the con-

² Ver. 14—16.

³ Compare ver. 13.

⁴ Col. iii. 16.

verts at Rome, St. Paul says that he has been emboldened to write to them, not to teach them things with which they had hitherto been unacquainted, but *as putting them in mind, (or, as calling these things to their remembrance,) because of the grace that was given to him of God, That he should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up, or sacrificing⁵ of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified, not by any legal observances, but by the gracious influences, of the Holy Ghost.⁶* In thus speaking of the Gentiles, as a *sacrifice* unto God, the apostle evidently refers to that passage in the book of the prophet Isaiah, in which Jehovah, speaking of the enlargement of the church, says, “And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations; as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel, into the house of the Lord.”⁷ We know, indeed, that, in strictness of speech, Christ is the only *priest* and *sacrifice* under the New Testament dispensation; but, according to the metaphorical language of the prophet, it may be said, of all believers, that they are an *acceptable offering unto God*, and, of the ministers of the gospel, that they are as *priests*, who, by the sword of the word, truly and effectually slay the sins of men, that so they may present their bodies and

⁵ See marginal reading.

⁶ Bishop Hall in loc.

⁷ Is. lxvi. 20.

their souls a *living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God!*⁸ And, assuredly, every minister of Christ, who lays to heart the truth which is here inculcated, will make it his daily prayer for *himself*, that, in the discharge of his high and sacred office, he may seek only the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; and for his *people*, that they may be daily and hourly prepared, to be an acceptable offering unto the Lord, *being sanctified by the Holy Ghost!*

St. Paul, having thus spoken of himself as the apostle of the Gentiles, now goes on to enlarge upon the manner in which the divine blessing had accompanied his labours. *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written,⁹ To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard, shall understand.*¹⁰

How careful is the apostle, in speaking of the success with which his labours had been crowned,

⁸ Chap. xii. 1.⁹ Is. lii. 15.¹⁰ Ver. 17—21.

to ascribe all the glory to him, to whom all is due! If he has *whereof he may glory*, it is not in himself; it is not in the honour, or the riches, or the wisdom of this world; but it is *through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God*. And I may observe, also, that there seems to be a peculiar propriety in the expression of *those things which pertain to God*, when viewed in connexion with the sixteenth verse; as the words are especially applicable to *victims presented unto God*.¹

His *glorying through Jesus Christ* is more fully illustrated in the eighteenth verse, where he says, *I will not dare to speak of any of those things which CHRIST hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed*: that is, I will not dare to set forth myself, by any faculty or worth of my own, or to mention any thing but that which CHRIST hath wrought by me, both in my doctrine and actions, for the winning of the Gentiles to obedience.² In thus speaking of *the things which CHRIST had wrought by him*, St. Paul bears the strongest testimony to his divinity. For to give a new heart and a new spirit is God's own high and peculiar prerogative;³ and yet this is the very power which the apostle ascribes to Christ, when he says that *he had wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient*. Going forth under the banner of Christ, and strengthened by the power

¹ Raphaelus in loc.

² Bishop Hall in loc.

³ See Ex. xxxvi. 26.

of his Spirit, the apostle had fully preached his gospel, *from Jerusalem*, in an extensive circuit of several thousands of miles, *even to Illyricum*, which is now called Sclavonia, lying on the Adriatic Sea; *striving*, as he says, *to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest he should build upon another man's foundation: but, as it is written,*⁴ *To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard, shall understand.*

For which cause also, as he goes on to say to the Roman converts, I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that,

⁴ Is. lvi. 15.

*when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*⁵

How unwearied is the zeal with which our apostle labours in his Master's cause ! He has told us, that *from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ* ; and now we find him, looking, as it were from the very confines of Illyricum, first toward Jerusalem, and then toward the regions in the west, hoping, as he tells the Roman converts, *to come by them into Spain*. It is not certainly known whether the apostle ever accomplished this intended journey to Spain ; but can we contemplate this devoted servant of the cross, marking out for himself, as *the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*,⁶ such a field of missionary enterprise without feeling that it must indeed have been an ardent love for the souls of men, and a deep and settled conviction of the truth of the message which he was commissioned to bear, which thus enlarged his heart to embrace the inhabitants of distant lands ?

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians,⁷ makes mention of the collections which, as he states in the passage before us, had been raised among the Gentile converts in Macedonia and Achaia, for the relief of the *poor saints at Jerusalem*. And the

⁵ Ver. 22—29.

⁶ Ver. 16.

⁷ See 1 Cor. xvi. and 2 Cor. viii. and ix.

manner in which he introduces the subject into this epistle, representing it as the bounden duty of the Gentile converts to communicate to the Jewish Christians of their temporal abundance, plainly shews that, in pursuance of the object which lay so near his heart, he gladly seized every opportunity of inculcating mutual love between the Jewish and Gentile converts at Rome.

The apostle says that, when he had performed the above service, and *sealed* to the poor saints at Jerusalem, (that is, safely delivered to them, as under a seal,) *this fruit* both of his labour, and the Gentiles' charity, he intended to come by Rome into Spain, *trusting to see the Roman converts on his journey, and to be brought on his way thitherward by them, if first he might be somewhat filled with their company.* In thus expressing a hope that he might be *somewhat*, or *in some degree*, *filled with their company*, St. Paul beautifully insinuates that, were he to indulge his own affections for the Christians at Rome, his visit to them would be much longer, than his views of duty elsewhere would permit. And the expression may also serve to remind us that, though believers may be *somewhat filled* with each other's company, during their earthly pilgrimage, it is Christ, and Christ only, who can "sate the souls" of his people with "fatness," and "satisfy them with his goodness."⁸

I have observed to you, in a former section,⁹

⁸ Jer. lxxi. 14.

⁹ Sect. ii. pp. 16, 17.

that our apostle went to Rome in a manner very different from that which he had anticipated when he wrote this epistle. But when we consider how the circumstance of his having been sent thither as an appellant to Cesar, contributed to the advancement of the gospel; and when we consider, moreover, how elevated is the language, how sublime the character, and how triumphant the spirit of those epistles which he wrote, during his imprisonment at Rome, to the churches at Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, we are constrained to acknowledge that, though “bonds and afflictions waited for him,”¹ he abundantly realized the hope which he now so confidently entertained, viz. that when he came to the Christians at Rome, he should *come to them in the FULNESS OF THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!*

St. Paul was fully aware that his approaching journey to Jerusalem would be attended with great danger and difficulty, through the enmity of the unbelieving, and the strong prejudices of the believing Jews against him. He proceeds, therefore, earnestly to commend himself to the prayers of the Roman converts. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may*

¹ Acts xx. 23.

be accepted of the saints ; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.^a

The language which the apostle employs in these verses strongly illustrates the importance of intercessory prayer. For, not content with simply requesting the prayers of the Christians at Rome, St. Paul beseeches them, in the most solemn manner, *for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that they STRIVE together with him in their prayers to God for him.* "Join your utmost strength and fervency with mine;" this seems to be the exact import of the original word:³ and, in like manner, in his epistle to the Colossians,⁴ he speaks of intercessory prayer as a kind of *wrestling with God*, describing Epaphras as always "*labouring or striving*⁵ *fervently for them in prayers; that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*" True indeed it is, that some of the prayers which the apostle so affectionately bespeaks, did for a time seem to be forgotten. He was for a while *delivered into the hands* of those in Judea, who *believed not*. But this dispensation, which might have been regarded as an invincible obstacle to his design, proved the very occasion of bringing him to Rome, and, as we have seen,⁶ powerfully promoted the success of his ministry there. It is plain, there-

^a Ver. 30—32.

³ *συναγωνισασθαι*.

⁴ Col. iv. 12.

⁵ *ἀγωνιζόμενος*.

⁶ Sect. ii. pp. 16, 17.

fore, that, in the passage before us, Christians are taught to “labour” and to “strive fervently in their prayers” for *others*, as well as for *themselves*; while, at the same time, they are solemnly reminded that, instead of rashly concluding that God hath rejected their prayers, only because they do not see them answered in the way most conformable to their own wishes, they should learn to adore Him who works the most important ends by methods which are to us unsearchable and past finding out! ⁶

St. Paul, having commended himself to the prayers of the Roman converts, now pours forth another prayer in their behalf, saying, *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*⁷ In other words; It is my earnest prayer for you all, that you may dwell together in that spirit of unity and godly love which I have been endeavouring to inculcate, looking to that *God of peace* who, through the blood of his well-beloved Son, has reconciled you to himself, and, in him, one to another! And may the *God of peace*; may he who has graciously given us this blessed *peace* with himself, and who has cemented our hearts together in the Christian

⁶ “ We read of a certain minister of Christ, who said to a great warrior, going out to battle, that he would *pray for him*. The warrior answered that it should not need, because if God meant him victory, it should come without his prayers. To this the preacher replied, ‘ Then also cast away your weapons, and your soldiers; since without them, if he will, God can save! ’ ”—T. Wilson in loc.

⁷ Ver. 33.

bonds of *peace* and *mutual love*, BE WITH YOU ALL.
AMEN!

The chapter which we have been reviewing, places God before us, as *the God of patience and consolation*, *the God of hope*, and *the God of peace*; and I would now observe, in conclusion, that, in the titles which our apostle has thus *successively* applied to the Most High, he appears to describe the steps by which the believer enters into *peace*! From the GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION, the believer derives that grace which enables him so to partake of the "sufferings of Christ," that he may partake also of the "consolation."⁶ Under an experimental sense of the power and sweetness of this consolation, the believer learns, under all the trials and afflictions of life, to approach his God, as the GOD OF HOPE. And, in proportion as the believer *abounds in hope*, *through the power of the Holy Ghost*, he finds his heart more and more disengaged from the things of this world; so that, amidst all the conflicting interests and the sinful passions of men, he is enabled still to *follow after the things which make for PEACE*, and thus to enjoy many a foretaste of that PERFECT PEACE which remaineth for the people of God!

Yes, brethren, it is with an abiding *peace* within his heart, that the Christian pilgrim goes on his way in *patience* and in *hope*; proving to

⁶ 2 Cor. i. 7.

others, as well as to himself, that he has been admitted to share in that *legacy of peace* which the Saviour has bequeathed to all who seek and love him!⁹ It is a *peace*, of which he feels well persuaded, that nothing shall ever deprive him; and it was under a sweet experience of its power, that a venerable Christian officer lately declared, when drawing near to the gates of death, that, though his severe bodily sufferings “sometimes interrupted his quiet, they did not *disturb his peace!*”

SECTION XLVIII.

CHAPTER XVI. ver. 1—16.

SALUTATIONS TO MANY BY NAME.

At the commencement of this epistle St. Paul saluted the Roman converts generally, saying, *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*¹ And now, as he draws near to the conclusion, after commending Phebe to the brethren, he beseeches them, in

⁹ See John xiv. 27.

¹⁰ Lord Gambier.

¹ Chap. i. 7.

the verses which form the subject of the present section, to salute several persons whom he specifies by name. The passage may seem to be little more than a mere catalogue of names; but, as Doddridge remarks, it is not without its moral and religious instruction. We see in it the *good heart* of the apostle; how full he was of the sentiments of Christian friendship, and how solicitous he was to express his esteem and love for his brethren in the Lord. And God hath made him the means of transmitting to posterity, the memorials of many persons, of whom, indeed, we do not read or hear anything elsewhere; but of whom we may rejoice to think that they merited the particular affection of St. Paul, and that they openly professed the gospel at Rome, in the reign of the wicked Nero, under whom it is highly probable that some of them suffered martyrdom for Christ.

*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.*² It is stated, in the note which, in our authorized version, is found at the end of this epistle, that it was “written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.” And although these subscriptions to the apostolical

² Ver. 1, 2.

epistles, which are not found in the most ancient manuscripts, are not to be esteemed as of any authority; yet it is very probable, from the language which the apostle employs in the above verses, that Phebe, who served the church at Cenchrea, (the seaport of Corinth,) in succouring distressed Christians, and in assisting the apostle himself, was charged by him with the care of this epistle, which was written at Corinth, during his second visit to Greece. St. Paul commends Phebe to the brethren at Rome, exhorting them to *receive her in the Lord*, that is, to receive her with Christian affection, for the Lord's sake, *as becometh saints*, or the holy servants of God, and *to assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of them*.

After having thus affectionately commended Phebe to the Christians at Rome, St. Paul commences his salutations. *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.*

If you refer to the eighteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will find that, when St. Paul first visited Corinth, he abode with Aquila and Priscilla, who had been expelled from the city of Rome by the decree of Claudius, the Roman emperor. But we may conclude that the decree was soon repealed, since we find, from the

passage before us, that Aquila and Priscilla had returned to Rome, before St. Paul wrote this epistle. Dr. Paley, in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*," compares the above passage with the narrative in the Acts, and shews how the undesigned coincidence between them tends to establish the genuineness of the writings, and the reality of the transactions. In the history recorded in the Acts, we are informed that Aquila and Priscilla were converted Jews; that St. Paul first met with them at Corinth; and that, for some time, he abode in the same house with them; and it may be concluded that, during St. Paul's contention at Corinth with the unbelieving Jews, who at first "opposed themselves and blasphemed," and afterwards, "with one accord, made insurrection against him,"³ Aquila and Priscilla adhered to the apostle; for we find it expressly stated, at the eighteenth verse, that when St. Paul left Corinth, they went with him. Under these circumstances it is highly probable that they, being themselves of Jewish birth, were involved in the dangers and persecutions which St. Paul underwent from the Jews; and that, by adhering to St. Paul in this dispute, they were accounted deserters from the Jewish cause. It may be observed, moreover, that, as they had co-operated with St. Paul in preaching to the Gentiles at Corinth, they must have been regarded as

³ Acts xviii. 6 and 12.

having taken a decided part in the great controversy of that day, viz. the admission of the Gentiles to a parity of religious situation with the Jews. And for this conduct alone, even had there been no other reason, they might seem to have been justly entitled to thanks from *all the churches of the Gentiles*. “Yet is all this,” says Dr. Paley, “so indirectly intimated, or, rather, so much of it is left to inference in the account given in the Acts, that I do not think it probable that a forger either could or would have drawn his representation from thence; and still less probable do I think it, that, without having seen the Acts, he would, by mere accident, and without truth for his guide, have delivered, as in the passage before us, a representation so entirely conformable to the circumstances there recorded.

St. Paul, you observe, sends greeting, not only to Priscilla and Aquila, but also to the *church that is in their house*. By this expression, we may understand, either the several Christians of whom their family was composed, or those believers who used to assemble together in their house, to join in social worship. And this latter interpretation would seem to be supported, as well by the received signification of the word rendered *church*,⁴ as by a reference to the known usages in the early days of Christianity, when sacred buildings were not yet

⁴ ἐκκλησία from ἐκκαλέω, evoco, convoco.

erected for the purposes of public worship, and when, as appears by the Acts of the Apostles,⁵ Christians met together to worship God in private houses.

Proceeding with his salutations, St. Paul says, *Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ;*⁶ having been, as we may infer from comparing this verse with a passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians,⁷ the first of the household of Stephanas who embraced the gospel. *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*⁸

From what St. Paul here says, respecting Andronicus and Junia, viz. that they were *in Christ before him*, it has been conjectured, by some, that they might have been the first persons who preached the gospel at Rome. But, be this as it may, it is evident that the apostle speaks of it, as peculiarly to the honour of Andronicus and Junia,⁹ that they were IN CHRIST BEFORE HIM. And is it not here written, as with a sunbeam, that, as we would give the most substantial proof of our love to those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, we should continually pray for them, that they may form an *early acquaintance with Christ*, and

⁵ See Acta ii. 46, and v. 42.

⁶ Ver. 5.

⁷ 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

⁸ Ver. 6, 7.

⁹ Doddridge in loc.

that, day by day and hour by hour, they may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?”¹ For we must ever remember that it is this daily and hourly GROWTH IN GRACE which distinguishes the real from the nominal professor of Christianity; and, accordingly, we find our apostle, speaking of himself, in his epistle to the Philippians, not only as desiring that he might be “found in Christ,”² but as continually “*following after*, if that he might apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus!”³

Having thus dwelt upon the expression of *being in Christ*, I would also take occasion to remind you how the apostle says, elsewhere, of all who are “in Christ,” that they are “new creatures.”⁴ Now, by this expression of a *new creature*, we are to understand, not the gift of any new faculties, or the revelation of any new truths, not contained in Scripture; but a new disposition to use all our faculties aright, and a new perception of the POWER of those truths which the Scriptures declare to us. The grand, the essential change, denoted by the expression of a *new creature*, consists, not in the presenting of new objects, with which we had never before been acquainted, but in new likings and dislikings of the old objects, with which we had been long familiar, but of which we had hitherto been

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

² Phil. iii. 9.

³ Phil. iii. 12; and see pp. 160 and 407.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 17.

making a wrong estimate. The approbations and the aversions of truly awakened sinners, with regard to all the great practical concerns of religion, are so thoroughly new, that, in the strong language of Scripture, "old things are passed away, all things are become new."⁵ The Bible had taught them before, that they were lost sinners; that their nature was depraved; that the *carnal mind is enmity against God*;⁶ and that every man is pronounced accursed who "continueth not in all things which "are written in the book of the law to do them."⁷ The Scriptures had taught them these solemn and important truths, and they had often repeated the expression, "Do thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders;"⁸ but, by the grace of God, they now see and feel that they really *are* what they have *confessed themselves to be*, and that they must have remained lost, miserable, undone objects of wrath and condemnation, had not God interposed, in his sovereign mercy, and *commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*⁹

But, to return to the salutations; *Greet Amplias*, says the apostle, *my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in*

⁵ 2 Cor v. 17.

⁶ Chap. viii. 7.

⁷ Deut. xxvii. 26; Gal. iii. 10.

⁸ General confession in the Prayer Book.

⁹ Chap v. 8. See Dean Milner's Sermons, vol. ii.

*Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.*¹ We here find St. Paul sending salutations, not to Aristobulus and Narcissus themselves, who, as we may conclude, had not been converted to Christianity; but only to their several households. It is generally supposed, indeed, that Narcissus was a rich man, notorious, even in heathen Rome, for the wickedness of his life. But the word of divine truth can penetrate everywhere; and accordingly we find, from the passage before us, that there were believers even in his household; nay, that the fame of their Christian graces had reached the apostle at Corinth.

*Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, continues the apostle, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.*² By describing Tryphena and Tryphosa as LABOURING in the Lord, and Persis as *having laboured much in the Lord*, St. Paul teaches us an important and very consolatory truth, viz. that though there is a difference among Christian labourers, some, according to their gifts, their means, and their opportunities, labouring more, and some less, yet that ALL, of whichever sex, or of whatever station, who *labour in the Lord*, according to the measure of the ability with which He has blessed them,

¹ Ver. 8—11.² Ver. 12.

shall have their due praise, and shall be accepted with their God !

Salute Rufus, says the apostle, *chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*³ It is probable that the Rufus, here named by the apostle, was the person noticed in the gospel of St. Mark, as being the son of Simon the Cyrenian.⁴ By *chosen in the Lord*, in this connexion, we may understand, according to the use of the word in several places of Scripture,⁵ a person of much eminence in the profession of the Christian faith, and endowed, as we may believe, with many valuable and singular gifts. It is with his accustomed tenderness, that our apostle sends greeting, also, to the *mother of Rufus*, as having been a mother to himself in love and affection !

Salute Asyncritus, he adds, *Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*⁶ In closing this catalogue of persons and families to whom St. Paul sent his salutations, I will add one observation, being an observation which has often been made respecting it, and which deserves to be repeated, viz. that our apostle does not make any mention whatever of Peter, though we can scarcely

³ Ver. 13.

⁴ Mark xv. 21.

⁵ See, particularly, Acts xv. 25, 26.

⁶ Ver. 14—16.

suppose that he would have omitted to do so, had Peter been then residing at Rome. I would also take occasion to observe, that had Peter been at Rome, when Paul afterwards came there as a prisoner, his name would scarcely have been passed over in silence by St. Luke, in the history of the Acts of the Apostles; that had he been there during the two years of Paul's imprisonment, the latter would not have complained to Timothy that, "at his first answer, all men forsook him;"⁷ and that had he been there during Paul's second imprisonment, our apostle would not, in all probability, have said, so emphatically, "only Luke is with me."⁸

Now if, under such circumstances, brethren, and on such occasions, Scripture is altogether silent on the subject of Peter's residence at Rome, must we not conclude, that it is only upon vague and unauthorized *traditions*, that the Papists have built that enormous fabric of usurpation and superstition, which has, for so many centuries, overshadowed the Christian world? As we contemplate its portentous form, intercepting the light which beams from heaven, and casting its dark shadow over that vital doctrine of justification by faith, which forms the groundwork of this epistle, may we learn to appreciate, more justly, the importance of that principle of the reformed church, which is set forth in our Articles, viz. that "HOLY

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 16.

⁸ 2 Tim. iv. 11.

SCRIPTURE containeth *all things necessary to salvation* ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation ! ”⁹

SECTION XLIX.

CHAP. XVI. ver. 17—27.

ADMONITION AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS, AND SALUTATIONS FROM SEVERAL BRETHREN, TOGETHER WITH PRAYER AND PRAISE.

We considered, in the preceding section, the salutations sent by St. Paul to many persons at Rome ; and now, before he concludes his epistle, we shall find him naming several brethren who joined with him in sending salutations to the Roman converts. But the apostle always seems to write *from the fullness of his heart* ; and, accordingly, he suspends, for a while, the termination of his letter, in order that he may add another word of solemn and earnest exhortation respecting that *peace of the church*, on

⁹ Article vi.

which he has so repeatedly touched since the comment of the fourteenth chapter.¹

*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf : but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*²

I mentioned, in the last section, that this epistle was written, when St. Paul was at Corinth, during his second visit to Greece. And we can the more readily understand, therefore, why he should have been so anxious to guard the Roman converts against those who *by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*, when we consider the intimate and personal knowledge which the apostle possessed of what had been done at Corinth, by persons of this description. For, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks of some, whom he describes as “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ ;”³ and, under a strong sense of the danger to which the Chris-

¹ Scott in loc.

² Ver. 17—20.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 13.

tians at Corinth were exposed from those false teachers, he says to them, with peculiar emphasis, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be *corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*"⁴ Such was the apostle's language to the Corinthian church, and it is, evidently, with the same view of impressing upon the Christians at Rome the importance of keeping themselves *pure* from any mixture of false doctrine and false worship, that he gives the warning contained in the above passage.

St. Paul tells the Roman converts that *their obedience was come abroad unto all men*, and that he was glad therefore on their behalf: but yet, he adds, *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*: in other words, I would have you to be obedient from an established judgment, as well as from a proper disposition of heart, so that you may know how to quarter the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. For, as the apostle plainly intimates in the language which he here employs, it is not enough that Christians are *simple concerning evil*, not knowing how to invent false doctrine, and so to DECEIVE OTHERS; but it is necessary that they should be also *wise unto that which is good*, being

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

able to discern true doctrine from false, and so being careful not to be DECEIVED THEMSELVES. Thus our blessed Lord represents the sheep as “knowing the shepherd’s voice,” but “not knowing the voice of strangers ;”⁵ and St. Paul elsewhere inculcates the same important truth, saying to the Thessalonians, “prove all things, hold fast that which is good ;”⁶ and praying, for the Philipians, that their “love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; that they may approve things that are excellent,” or, according to the marginal reading, “*try things that differ.*”⁷

St. Paul’s warning to the Roman converts, to *mark*, and to *avoid*, those who *cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they have learned*, is accompanied by the encouraging declaration that the *God of peace*, (an attribute introduced with singular beauty and propriety after the mention made of the *divisions and offences* caused by false teachers,) *shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly*. There is, in these words, an evident allusion to the promise made to our first parents in paradise, that the woman’s seed should “bruise the serpent’s head.”⁸ And it is, therefore, as if the apostle had said ; God is *the God of peace*, and you shall find him, in and through Christ, to

⁵ John x. 4, 5.

⁶ 1 Thes. v. 21.

⁷ Phil.i. 9, 10 ; and see Rom. ii. 18, for the same marginal reading.

⁸ Gen. iii. 15.

be your peace. Satan has been already *bruised under his feet*; so that the promise has been perfectly fulfilled in Christ, who is the head: and you may rest assured, therefore, that the same promise will, in due time, be completely fulfilled in his members. You must, indeed, continue to fight manfully, for a while, under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil: but be of good courage; God will enable you, animated and supported by the first great promise which you have seen so illustriously fulfilled in your leader, to withstand all the crafts and assaults of the evil one; and it will not be long before you are brought to *perfect peace*. Yea, *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, and, in the mean time, *may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Observe, I beseech you, how the apostle follows up the promise of the believer's final victory with the language of prayer. Let this be the spirit in which you receive all the divine promises; and if you are thus continually drawing near in prayer to him, who is the only fountain of them all, how blessed is the thought, that though Satan may *assault*, he shall not have *dominion* over you! Yes, brethren, though you inwardly feel the insupportable load of sin, you shall be secured, through the power of divine grace, from its breaking out into action. But still you will feel how indispensable it is to wage a perpetual warfare against all your

remaining corruptions; and, while you rejoice in believing that your sins and infirmities, felt and lamented, but not allowed, or brought into practice, are all pardoned, how earnestly will you long for the glorious liberty of the children of God to be revealed hereafter! Yea, how often will you anticipate that blessed day, when you shall experience the full accomplishment of the promise before you, and when you shall be placed beyond the reach of evil for ever and for ever!

The apostle's prayer for the Roman converts is followed by the names of the brethren who joined with him in sending salutations to them. *Timotheus, my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*⁹

It is generally thought that the *Sosipater* here mentioned, is the same with "Sopater of Berea,"¹⁰ mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; the slight difference between the two names being accounted for by a difference of dialect between St. Luke and St. Paul. And if this conjecture be correct, it constitutes an additional argument in support of what was said, in the last section, as to the time when this epistle was written. For we find, from the history in the Acts, that Sopater was one

⁹ Ver. 21—23.

¹⁰ Acts xx. 4.

of those who accompanied St. Paul into Asia, after his second visit to Greece.

Among the brethren named in the above verses, we find mention made of *Tertius*, as having *written this epistle*; and we gather, from the second epistle to the Thessalonians,¹ which was written before the epistle to the Romans, that St. Paul was accustomed to dictate to an amanuensis the great body of his epistles, adding a few words with his own hand at the close, as a token that they were genuine. We may conclude therefore, that, in the instance before us, the salutations being ended, the apostle, desiring to repeat, with additional emphasis, the benediction given at the twentieth verse, so that it might be extended to *all the Christians at Rome*, took the pen into his own hand, and wrote: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you ALL. Amen.*²

And here, in accordance with the manner in which St. Paul usually concluded his epistles, it might have been supposed that he had brought his letter to a close; but it would seem as if his deep conviction of the importance of the truths on which he had been expatiating, would not suffer him to conclude without offering up his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for all the mercies of redemption. And, accordingly, with a heart quite overflowing with thankfulness for the blessings of

¹ 2 Thea. iii. 17 · see also 1 Cor. xvi. 21.

² Ver. 24.

the gospel, he follows up his benedictory invocation with the following noble ascription of praise and glory to God: *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:)* To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.³

The language of the above doxology may be regarded as corresponding with that of the first five verses of the epistle: for, in both passages, St. Paul speaks of the *power* of God; the *Lord Jesus Christ*; the *ancient scriptures*; the *gospel* of peace; and its publication *for the obedience of faith*, or, *for obedience to the faith*, among all nations. But, to describe this doxology in a very few words, it plainly speaks to us of the *power*, the *goodness*, and the *wisdom* of God.

1. The apostle speaks first of the *power* of God, saying, *to him that is of power to stablish you*; thus solemnly reminding us that it is God alone who can *establish* us, and enable us to persevere in his grace even to the end!

2. He directs our attention, in the next place, to the *goodness* of God, by speaking of the *gospel*, and

³ Ver. 25—27.

the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, having only been shadowed out in dim types and figures; but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, or, by the full understanding of the scriptures of the ancient prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known, not to one people only, but to ALL NATIONS, for the obedience of faith; or, as the same expression is rendered in the first chapter,⁴ for obedience to the faith. If, adopting the former interpretation, we read, for the obedience of faith, we must understand the apostle to say, that the mystery of redemption has been revealed to all nations, that they may believe the promises of grace, and rest in them by that true and lively faith, which is the parent of all true obedience. Or if, adopting the latter interpretation, we read, for obedience to the faith, we must understand him to describe the above mystery as having been revealed to all nations, that they may be won over to embrace it, and to submit themselves to the doctrines and precepts of the gospel.

3. St. Paul dwells, lastly, on the wisdom of God, saying, To God ONLY WISE, be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen. In other words; To HIM, who is the only fountain of all true wisdom, and who, in the manifestation of his own adorable and unsearchable wisdom, has triumphed over Satan,

⁴ Chap. i. 5.

by that very event, which he had been labouring to accomplish, and which he had vainly regarded as “his own hour, and the power of darkness,”⁵ even by the death of our divine Redeemer: to HIM ONLY WISE, *be glory*, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, as the only channel, through which all good gifts are to be conveyed to us, and all our praises are to be referred to God, *for ever. Amen!*

And, as I would now go on to ask, what are the words which I have just repeated and explained to you, but a recapitulation of the doctrine contained in this epistle, and a compendium of the Christian faith? May we have grace, my beloved brethren, always to view them in this instructive and affecting light! And, as we rise from our present meditations, may it be deeply impressed upon our hearts, that all the glory of our salvation is to be ascribed to God alone; that the blessed POWER of his grace, is our only strength, and our only confidence; that it is the same heavenly grace which not only produces faith in our hearts, but ESTABLISHES it, and carries it on to perfection; that the GOSPEL of Jesus Christ, is at once the *rule of our* FAITH and the *standard of our* OBEDIENCE; that the great *mysteries*, which are *revealed* to us in the New Testament, were FORESHADOWED AND FORETOLD UNDER THE ELDER DISPENSATION; that the truths of the gospel have been, and shall be, MADE KNOWN TO ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH,

⁵ Luke xxii. 53.

not according to the will of man, but ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF THE EVERLASTING GOD; that, in all those truths which are above the reach of the human understanding, we ought to submit, with humble and adoring hearts, to the WISDOM OF GOD, since, in the grand mystery of our Redemption, we see how the “foolishness of God is wiser than men,” and how “the weakness of God is stronger than men;”⁶ and, lastly, that the glory which is to be ascribed by the redeemed on earth to GOD ONLY WISE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, or, as it is expressed by the Apostle Jude, “to the only wise God our Saviour,”⁷ shall continue to be ascribed by the redeemed in heaven, “to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN!”⁸

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 25.⁷ Jude 25.⁸ Rev. v. 13.

THE END.

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